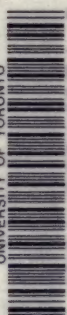


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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## HÉLOÏSE AND ABÉLARD



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BY  
GEORGE MOORE

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# HÉLOÏSE AND ABÉLARD

## CHAP. XXI.

THE ship that brought the twain from Orléans to Tours was still lying alongside the wharf, and it was Denise's project that they should hire it to take herself and Alan back to Nantes, for Abélard had seen a horse in the inn stables that pleased him, and was saying that horses might be dearer at Orléans than at Tours, and that it was not likely that he would see one that pleased him more than a certain bay stallion. A moment after the ostler led the horse into the yard, and Alan whispered that he was a bargain. Abélard sprang into the saddle and rode round the yard, the bay stallion bucking a little, Abélard balancing his long body, his short legs tight about the horse like a girth—a broad, lean man, who sat the bay stallion well, his shoulders square, his hands low down on the horse's withers. The horse bounded across the yard, bucked and bounded again, till, feeling the task to unseat his rider to be hopeless, he suddenly stopped, and stood champing the bit, in a rage. Alan had his hand on one rein and the owner of the horse had his on the other. He bucks in no evil intent, said the horse-dealer; it's only his play. He will not kick again for he has learnt his master, Alan said, returning to Denise, who was anxious that Abélard should not buy so head-strong a brute. Dissuade Abélard! cried Alan; look at him and tell me if his body and mind are not as like as twins, as stubborn one as the other. Alan is quite right, Héloïse answered quickly; were the world searched,



nothing more like his mind would be found than his body. But, like Denise, she was averse from savage animals, and Abélard, to cut a story that was beginning to be a long one, short, rode away waving his hand, saying to himself: everything is settled; protracted farewells may be borne only by those whose hearts are cold. And knowing himself to be already sick with grief at parting from his dear Héloïse, and that his pain would grow worse day by day, he began to think of the book that she wished him to write (the title they had discovered together: *Sic et non*), and rode in meditation of it for her sake, till he caught sight of a tall man walking very quickly in front of him. To pass him by he would have to push his horse into a trot, and he did not do this, for he could not put it out of his mind that he had known somebody who walked with that very gait, somebody whom he had known long ago and intimately. But though he rummaged his memory he failed always at the last moment to recall his former friend, and in his perplexity, as he was about to pass the wayfarer by he drew rein, saying to himself: it cannot be, and yet—— He trotted his horse on again and looked back. It is the Comte de Rodebœuf, he said to himself, tramping the road in tatters like any common gleeman, a lute upon his back. The Comte de Rodebœuf himself, or the devil, he said aloud. The Comte de Rodebœuf I am, and maybe on my way to the devil, but whose are the eyes that can see the Comte de Rodebœuf through these sorry rags? The Comte de Rodebœuf's eyes are blinder than mine, Abélard answered, for seemingly he does not know his gleeman of old time, Lucien de Marolle. Lucien de Marolle, Rodebœuf repeated, but I remember him well; my horse found him asleep under a tree, and afterwards we sang and composed together for many months, eighteen months or two years, maybe, I have forgotten which. Abélard replied: my name is now Pierre Abélard. Now a trouvère, the Comte interjected,

ascended from gleeman to trouvère, while I descended from trouvère to gleeman. Sir—— began Abélard, but the Comte, stopping him, said : we are equals, and had distinctions to be indulged in it would be for me to honour thee with plurality ; but I have not forgotten Lucien altogether, so we'll thou and thee each other as wayfarers should. But thy garb is——? Philosophic, Abélard answered. No surprise is that, the Comte answered, for thou wast never without a thought for dialectics, and could put down the lute with pleasure to embarrass a man with subtle reasoning till he found himself in a quandary, and then the spirit of the lute would rise up in thee again and philosophy would be forgotten, Pierre du Pallet. So Pierre du Pallet is now Pierre Abélard, the greatest philosopher since Plato. Which may be true or false, Abélard cried, but it is certain that thou'rt the Comte de Rodebœuf, and it ill befits me to ride beside thee when thou goest on foot. My good Pierre, it is greatly pleasing to me to meet thee in the flutter of thy good fortune, and I pray that it may never leave thee ; but unless thy way be mine, we must part, for I have business by yonder hill which may mend my state. But I would come with thee and hear thy story and tell thee mine, and help thee if I may, Abélard rejoined. To help me, the Comte replied, will be an easy task, for thou'rt the best lutanist in the land of France, and my broken fingers cannot touch the strings as they used to in the olden days. Wilt play for me? Of a certainty I will, Abélard said ; but are the trees and the clouds our audience? Not so, the Comte answered ; but let us hasten our steps and I will tell thee as we march along. There is a coach that ascends that hill-side at sunset, and if we are there before it comes the passengers will distribute largess for our songs. Of a certainty, said Abélard, I will play and sing for thee, but—— Of what thinkest thou? Rodebœuf enquired. Of the horse I am riding, Abélard

replied. Thou'lt leave him at the inn, Rodebœuf answered; a good hostel lies between us and the last hill, and the last half-league we will walk together and wait in the shade of a rock, for there are no trees, till the coach comes into sight. The adventure pleases me greatly, said Abélard, and I shall listen to the story of thy broken fingers, with sorrow, of course. My fingers, my fingers! the Comte cried, thou shalt hear their story when we have collected our pence on yonder hill-side. Ride on in front of me, and when thy horse has been stabled follow the road and find me on the hill-side.

Abélard struck his heels into his horse, forgetful of the animal's temper, and the fight was a stiff one, but Abélard was again the victor, and when he walked out of the inn stables after giving instructions for the care of his horse he caught sight of Rodebœuf coming round the bend in the road, hurrying over the ground as fast as his long legs could carry him, for the Comte de Rodebœuf was a tall, hale man, with a red beard and a pleasing voice that cried: come, come, all the haste we can make is needed. But if we hurry so, Abélard cried, we shall have no breath for song. True, thou art shorter legged than I, and as I do not catch sight of the coach on which my hope is set, let us carry our thoughts back to Erato, the Muse of light song I believe her to be, but thou canst tell me. Abélard was about to reply, but seeing the Comte bent over the dust in search of tracks, he refrained. I see no tracks, and as I gather from the undisturbed dust that we are in time, we would do well to rehearse our little concert. We will sing our old songs if thou hast not forgotten them, said Abélard. Not one have I forgotten—not one of mine nor one of thine. Ten minutes, no more, is needed for rehearsal. To it, he cried, handing Abélard his lute, and as they knew each other's methods from old time an excellent entertainment was ready for the travellers when they appeared. Coin after



coin was thrown to the gleemen, and when the coach horses broke into a trot the Comte de Rodebœuf said: if we could do as well each day as we have done to-day there would be no need to complain of my evil fortune. And I am glad that it is to thee, Pierre, that I owe this little store; to no one would I liefer be indebted. The debt may be paid with thy story, Mathieu, Abélard answered. Let me hear how the great Comte de Rodebœuf lost all his money and estates and became a travelling gleeman.

Thou'lt not believe that such a reversal of fortune could befall me or any man, and of all me, whose life till a few years ago was successful in all things, in the lists, in song and love story. Dost believe in evil powers, Abélard? In the spells of the witches, and the enchantments of magicians, sorcerers, and the like? In devils, of course, for there could not be a hell without devils. But there are evil spirits that are not in hell, and other evils. Who does not believe in the evil eye? And there are gems that bring evil upon those who wear them. The opal is of evil repute, and we shrink from a man who wears one. Worst of all, there are animals that bring evil, as is well known. Men who have been fortunate all their lives become possessed of a certain dog or horse, and from that moment are followed by misfortune and disaster. Birds have always been believed to be the harbingers of good or evil tidings; ravens are a sign of death, magpies cannot be seen separately without danger if we do not turn round three times. These birds are speaking birds, the most dangerous to man, as I know to my cost, and the dealer who sold me Laure knew it, for of a certainty he was of the plot to do me evil; but I know not whether his power was on the bird or the bird's power on him. Let this pass: I bought a grey bird, whose wrinkled eyelid fell over an eye that seemed to know all things. Thou'rt thinking that it would be easy to wring the neck of such a bird,

Pierre, and I often thought of ridding myself of Laure in that way (Laure was the bird's name), but I could not bring myself to wring her neck, whether from some inward fear or some outward fear I do not know. Nor would it have been easy for me to wring Laure's neck, for as soon as I approached her cage, Laure began to meditate the harm she might do me, and I'm not thinking of her beak, though these birds bite to the very bone. Let this pass, for one reason or another I never strangled that evil bird, but let her live to bring about my ruin.

But before I tell the haps, I will tell thee something of the bird's hatred of me, how it flashed out of her round, black eyes whenever I went near her. She was dependent upon me for all she ate and drank. Was it for that she hated me? I often wondered. We cannot enter into a bird's thoughts, but for certain Laure loved evil for evil's sake, for if I gave her a piece of cake, she would look round for the dog, whistle for him, and Fido would come jumping gleefully into the room. Laure would show him the cake, and poor Fido, who loved cake, would go sniffing, unsuspecting, to the cage, the wicked bird enticing the dog on till his nose was within reach. She would hold on to the dog's nose, and when she released him, Laure would look down from her perch, her round eyes full of malice and hate. As Fido was always getting into trouble with Laure I put the bird into another room. But I haven't told that the bird was bought in the hope that she would learn some phrases of tenderness from me; and when they were perfectly remembered, my project was to present Laure to the Lady Margherita, the wife of my neighbour, the Comte Raymond de Castel-Rousillon. Thou hast him in mind still, Abélard, and our visits to his castle, thou and I, and the great tourney that was held there when I challenged all comers to meet me in the lists, and overcame all comers, wearing the sleeve of Lady Margherita? If thou hast not forgotten Raymond altogether, thou hast



in mind an almost crooked little fellow, who escaped the shape of a dwarf and hunchback but by so little that his frail legs would not bear him to the tourney. Nor was he equal to writing the humblest song or sonnet, couplet or stanza; plaint or dirge were rarely tried by him, and it was hard not to smile when he read his poems. But this can be said for him, that he soon understood that the Muses had not called him, and he often said it was fortunate that I was a neighbour, for without me his wife's beauty would remain unsung. Dost remember her, the gracious Lady Margherita? Abélard nodded, saying that her image was fixed in his memory. Thy story rouses me, he said; continue, old friend, continue. The wicked bird, I am telling, would learn no tender phrase nor song of mine; and if I persisted in my teaching the wrinkled eyelid dropped over the round black eye, and I was not sure whether Laure slept or waked. I was often much concerned to know what to do with this bird; give her away I could not, having spoken of Laure to Lady Margherita, who was looking forward to hearing the bird talk to her of me and whistle snatches of my songs during the long intervals which we had to endure lest Raymond should suspect our attachment for one another. So on my next visit to the castle I took the bird with me and gave him into the charge of my lady, for it seemed to me that even this devil would yield to the beauty and the sympathy and the charm of Margherita. But it was not so. The bird's mind was made up against Margherita at once, and she formed a hatred against her that mayhap caused her to forget her hatred of me, at which we were much surprised. Our surprise increased when the bird took Raymond into her affection, a man in whom there was nothing that might win the love of man or woman. I would not say anything ungracious of my old friend, but to speak the whole truth, Abélard, Raymond never had a sincere friend but me. So it fell out that Laure was

only happy with Raymond, and we noticed that she moped when he left the room, and that her hatred of us if we drew near her was greater than ever it was when he was present; and we noticed too, indeed the sight was most flagrant, that when Raymond came in she would call to him to open her cage, and out of it she would come, and climbing up his arm to his shoulder, her head against his ear, she would talk to him privily; and we were glad of this, suspecting nothing, thinking that Raymond had made a friend at last.

Laure's attachment to him was a great joy to Raymond, and we all wished to please him. He was flattered that this bird that cared for nobody else should attach herself to him, and we often wondered what she said to the Comte, for when in the mood Laure seemed to be able to say anything; she would speak things we had never heard her say before, whilst we sat quaking, Margherita and myself, lest the bird had learnt some of our talk that would leave the Comte doubtful of our love. If the morning were wet, Laure would say: it's a wet morning, a very wet morning, Laure doesn't want to go out in the wet. Pretty little Laure, pretty little Laure, doesn't believe in getting wet. If the day was sunny she never said it was raining, but: a nice sunny day, a nice day for a walk, for Laure to go for a walk in the garden, and so forth, and there were many more phrases which I cannot remember. But very soon we began to notice that she was talkative only when Raymond was in the room; when Margherita and myself were alone with her, she sat on her perch silent and solemn, listening to us, learning what we said to each other, getting by heart all the little phrases of endearment between lovers: I wonder how it is I love you so dearly, Margherita, for thou art more to me than anything, and all my happiness is being with thee. This she could say as plainly as you or I, causing us often to quake, till one day we saw her lay her head

against Raymond's ear and heard her speak some phrases of our endearments into it. Raymond rose from his seat astonished, for he had never used the words: when naked thou'rt soft and sweet as a rose. He said nothing, but his look chilled our hearts, for we could not think else than that he suspected us, and we noticed that he spoke little to us but watched us as he had never done before. Raymond is meditating something, I said to myself, trying to find courage to ask me if it is true that I love his wife. Raymond was by nature a shy, sullen man, who kept turning a thing over in his mind, but never speaking his mind to us, trusting himself only to Laure, who now spent most of the day on his shoulder. We quaked when we heard her speak the words into his ear: I wonder how it is I love thee dearly, Margherita, and all my happiness is being with thee. It is often said that wisdom comes out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, but this time it came from a parrot's beak. Hast thou deceived me, Mathieu, or is the bird a liar? Raymond asked me one day as we rode from the castle with our falconers. I have not deceived thee, Raymond, I answered; nor is the bird a liar. She was owned by another Margherita. I had not thought of that, Raymond replied, and the gloom passed out of his face, and I was heartened when he said: forgive me for mistrusting thee.

But that evening as we sat together Laure began to mutter: Mathieu, I love thee dearly. Wouldst thou have me believe, cried Raymond, that this parrot was owned by another Margherita who loved another Mathieu? and he looked at his wife steadily; and the silence throughout the room was unbearable. Wouldst thou have me believe, he repeated, that this bird was owned by another Margherita and another Mathieu? Raymond, said Margherita, the parrot is no liar; we love each other dearly. But you have not sinned? Raymond asked. Whereupon the bird answered: we all enjoy a little sin,

pretty little Laure. Raymond, I said, this bird is possessed of an evil spirit whose aim is to bring about our ruin. Margherita has spoken the truth, we love each other dearly; could it be else that I could live side by side in company with so beautiful a woman as Margherita without loving her? My songs have made her beauty known to all the world, and these songs could not have been written if I had not loved her and if my love was not returned. It is true that thy songs seemed to be written out of thy heart, Raymond answered, but I hoped that my friend was a faithful friend. And rising from his seat, he said: I know not whether to put my trust in the bird or in you. Laure will tell the truth to me perchance. And he called the bird out of her cage, and Laure walked up his arm and laid her head against his ear. But no word would she speak. Margherita, he said, it was thy grief always that thou didst marry a man who could not make known thy beauty to the world: and that was why Mathieu came hither, said Raymond. Then picking up the thread of argument from Margherita quickly, I turned to Raymond, saying: no man loves songs and music like thee, and the Muses repay us for our many nights of toil and labour with a woman's love, and of thee they ask forbearance. Wilt thou prove unfaithful to the arts thou hast loved by separating us for ever? Other knights may praise the Lady Margherita, Raymond muttered. But none will praise me, Margherita answered, as he has praised me. I love you both, though my love for you both is a different love. I love Mathieu for his genius, and thee for thy recognition of it. By the power of tenson, stanza, ballade and rondeau, I have been made famous in France, and in making me famous he has exalted thee among men; thou art the husband of the most beautiful woman in France, and it cannot be that thou wouldst destroy with thine own hands the fame we have built up for thee. Thou shalt not destroy thyself, Raymond,



she said; and taking a hint once more from the Lady Margherita, I said: whilst thou wast with thy wife last night, sleeping side by side, I was striving with sonnet and pastourelle, thinking amid many difficulties of expression and action of the joy my rhymes would be to thee. Here are the labours of the night, and I passed several dawn songs and reverdies into Raymond's hands, together with some serenades; and while he read them I watched his face, noting that he missed nothing and loved it all. So taking my lute up gently I struck some chords to enhance the melody, and so well did I do this that Raymond began to soften towards us and would have taken us both in his arms, saying: for the sake of the art of which we all three are different promoters I will forgive thee. He would have spoken these words of a certainty if the bird on his shoulder had not said: Mathieu loves Margherita, for her breasts are white as doves and her garden is sweet in his nostrils; which was true indeed, but which roused Raymond into such a fury of passion that he tore up my beautiful songs and threw the pieces upon the fire. And after watching them burning for a while he rushed across the room and returned with a sword, with which he would have killed me if I had not fled on to the balcony. Nor was I safe from him there; the bird's screams urged him after me, and escape was no longer possible except by springing from the balcony, which I did, thereby breaking my wrist and fingers. Such is my story, and for why I am no longer a lute-player, Pierre, look at my maimed hands.

My servants found me in the morning and carried me away to my castle, where I slowly recovered. Only a partial recovery it was, Abélard, for I have never been the same since in mind or body, not since that night when an evil bird accomplished my ruin.

So that is how the world lost its lute-player, said Abélard. My life in the beginning was all good fortune, Rodebœuf



answered, but the spell was cast and it was never raised. Worst of all, after my fingers, I lost my heart, to a lady less worthy than Margherita, for whom I gave great tournaments and composed much. But my songs estranged us. Thy fingers, she said, are gone; thy lute-playing is over for ever and the songs written for me are less than the songs composed for the Lady Margherita. I believed that her heart would soften, and continued to give tournaments in her honour. I gave large sums of money to the Crusades in the hope of winning back my luck. Lady Beatrice died, and my lands were sold to pay the priests to sing Masses for the repose of her soul. And here am I, Pierre Abélard, in a gleeman's rags, a gleeman without a patron, a gleeman without fingers, striving to pick up my living, an outcast on the road, who, if he does not find a patron soon, will have to seek his fortune in Palestine. And what hope hast thou, Abélard asked, of finding a patron? One may be found, Rodebœuf answered, in the Castle of Franchard; a Court of Love is being held there, and a prize will be given for the best song. But I can write no more songs, neither the words of the songs nor the music that follows the words. My head is as empty as my heart; but if thou wilt write a song for me I can sing it. Pierre Abélard, we were comrades long ago; save me from the Saracen. If a song of mine will save thee, I will write one; and my heart will be in it, for a song I have not written this many a day, Abélard answered. Then let us go hence to write a song together, and that we can do well in the inn yonder. Write me a song, Abélard, that will save me from Palestine, for I have no stomach for crossing the sea to fight the Saracen. But to Palestine I must go, for I have no heart to sing on hill-sides, wheedling pennies from passengers on a coach, nor for loitering at street corners strumming till housewives put their heads out of the windows. The Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf must find a patron or die in Palestine. Come,

Abélard, we are rested ; come and write a song for me at the inn.

## CHAP. XXII.

THE day died pale and fragrant as a flower and the night was half over when the moon rose through the orchard trees. A minstrel, eager to be heard, struck a chord and began a song, but screams and coarse laughter compelled him to lay aside his lute in despair : music will have to wait, he said, till the low fellows and their wenches yonder have drunken themselves sleepy ; till then, let us talk. Abélard called for wine, and story was at height among the minstrels when a black-bearded man with Southern brilliancy and vivacity in his eyes and voice (a Basque he was guessed to be by many) came whirling towards them, dragging after him two unwilling wolves in leash. On hearing that my old friend, the Comte de Rodebœuf—— he began. Thy old friend, the Comte de Rodebœuf, is here to welcome Jean Guiscard. Thou wast never as other men, Jean, for a kind heart seems to have brought thee prosperity. What wine wilt thou drink ? I will drink wine from thy flagon and sing some of my new songs to the company, Jean Guiscard answered, but catching sight of smiles upon all faces, he looked enquiringly at Rodebœuf. At that moment a great outburst from the gleemen and gleemaidens in the field behind the inn rendered a reply from Rodebœuf unnecessary, and Jean Guiscard said : men must amuse themselves according to their wont ; and wishing that all should hear him, he began to narrate his errand again, saying that when tidings of the Comte de Rodebœuf came to the Castle of Franchard, he begged permission of the most noble Vicomtesse de Chatelleraud, the President in the absence of Eleanor of Aquitaine, now in Palestine, that he might go to the inn and welcome his friend, and

answering him out of her well-known care for music, she said : yes, go to thy old friend, the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, the great lutanist of France, and bring him here to-morrow, for I would see him. And then we spoke of the lady in whose honour thou gavest many tournaments, for whom thou didst tilt in many victorious sallies, and whose beauty thy songs made known to all the world. Jean Guiscard had to press Rodebœuf for an answer, saying, to get one : is't true that the love of the Lady Margherita cost thee thy lands and castle ? Had she cost me no more than my lands and castle, Rodebœuf replied, things would be better with me than they are. She cost me my fingers, and for lack of them thou seest the great Comte de Rodebœuf fallen so low that he can fall no lower. To the story of thy fingers, said Guiscard ; we would hear the whole of it, for, though we cannot restore thy fingers to thee, the hope of the Vicomtesse de Chatelleraud, and of all the presidents of the Courts of Love, is to put thee back into the ease and leisure thy songs have earned for thee. To thy story, great singer.

And when Jean Guiscard had heard the story of the Comte's misfortunes, he said : the Lady Margherita and the Comte Raymond de Castel-Rousillon, both of whom owe their renown to the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, shall be called upon to relieve him of his poverty. We have a duty to perform towards thee ; thy rehabilitation is no less than the strict duty of our Court, now in session. My cause appeals—— Rodebœuf began. Thy cause appeals, Jean Guiscard interrupted, to the whole of French minstrelsy. Maybe, said Rodebœuf, it is as thou sayest, that my songs have earned me the right to the help of French minstrelsy. But it was not for the love of the Lady Margherita that I wasted my substance in festival and tourney, but for the love of the Lady Beatrice. Then the Lady Beatrice, Jean Guiscard cried, shall be called upon. The Lady Beatrice will be called in vain, Rodebœuf replied,

for she is amongst the gone now two years come Michaelmas. For his care of thee, her husband will hold a place next to thee in the story of French minstrelsy, said Jean Guiscard, and he should—— The songs I wrote in praise of the Lady Beatrice, alas, Rodebœuf replied, did not win the same glory as those I wrote for the Lady Margherita. Then it is the duty of the Lady Margherita—— cried Jean Guiscard. But, good friend, Rodebœuf responded dolefully, I sang the praises of the Lady Beatrice, and in these songs—— Ah, well do I know how the rhyme runs away with the singer, said Jean. Thy case is no simple one, but the Court shall consider it, and whatever the judgment may be thy estate will be bettered. It cannot be worsened, Rodebœuf exclaimed. But thinkest that the way to escape from the horns of the dilemma would be to grant me a prize for a song? Enlarging the original sum, Abélard interjected; making it worthy of the acceptance of the great Comte de Rodebœuf, whose gleeman I once had the honour to be in days gone by.

Jean Guiscard nodded a careless approval, and without troubling Abélard with questions he allowed his mind to return to the Castle of Franchard and its many duties, telling that a judgment would be given to-morrow that would make clear the new laws of love or the old laws fallen into disuse, for one of the first cases to be heard was a minstrel's, who, when his hopes were at their highest, began to notice that his lady's face had changed from pleasure to dismay. And on enquiring the cause of the change, she answered: it is a pleasure to listen to thee, minstrel, but I love another. Whereupon his heart sank, and she said: but if ever I should cease to be in love I pray thee to present thy petition again. So overjoyed the minstrel was by these gracious words that he rode away, certain that though his present might be dark his future would be bright. But three weeks were barely



gone when the news came to him that the lady had married her lover, said Guiscard ; and it having been laid down by Eleanor of Aquitaine that love cannot exist in marriage, he has brought a suit against her. But how, said Abélard, will this ingenious case be decided ? Without turning his head, Jean Guiscard answered that there was little doubt that the Vicomtesse de Chatelleraud would uphold the ruling of Eleanor of Aquitaine—— And call upon the lady to recompense the minstrel, Abélard interjected. As Jean Guiscard did not answer the Comte de Rodebœuf was about to name the two men to each other, but Abélard laid his hand upon Rodebœuf's arm and whispered in his ear : remember that I am Abélard only for thee ; for the company I am the gleeman Lucien de Marolle. Out of deference to Rodebœuf's friendship for his gleeman Jean Guiscard softened a little to Abélard. Thou wouldst know, he said, turning to him, the fate of the lady should she fail to redeem her promise to the minstrel ? She will forfeit our approbation and pay the penalty of disobedience to our president, to be held in little esteem by all who number themselves of our company.

He put out his hand for the flagon ; Rodebœuf passed it to him, and very soon it began to seem to all that the great trouvère had come to them full of wine and might be unable to tell them if he had regained the love of his lady, whose beauty he had celebrated in the loveliest songs of French minstrelsy. It was known that he had left her castle and sung the praises of another, whom he had left abruptly and devoted himself to great deeds to win Louve out of her obstinacy, for she refused to see him. Before his arrival that evening the strangest tales were told about him ; his madness or death were expected by the minstrels, and the violent drinking, to which they were witnesses, was whispered to be part of his love ; no doubt it was, and in grave disquiet they watched Jean



Guiscard emptying flagon after flagon, each minstrel debating how Jean might be coaxed into the confession of his folly or of his lady's heartlessness. Another flagon and he will not be able to tell us, all were thinking, when Jean Guiscard broke the silence.

It may be that you would hear the story of Louve's cruelty to me, but it's known to all the world. We would hear the story, cried many voices, and flattered by the interest in him which he read on every face, Jean Guiscard took heart. Since it would please you to hear that the stories told about me and the Lady Louve are untrue, I will tell reasons for my leaving her for a while which you, minstrels of love, will apprehend and appreciate. The company bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, and Jean Guiscard continued: for our love to be of value we must know it, and we can only know it by contrast and comparison; and it was to make plain to myself that all is false, void and counterfeit except Louve, that I went to Marseilles and sang the praises of another lady. On hearing of my songs and judging them to be equal to those that I wrote in praise of her beauty, Louve began to hate me soon. I was thrown out of her heart, before I returned, and when I returned confident that there was no love for me but my love of Louve, I was met at the gate by lackeys, who bade me begone. Others would have been glad to receive me at their courts for the sake of the renown my songs would bring them, but my love of Louve was too deep in my heart and I retired to the forest in the hope that my miserable condition in a cave would move her to forgiveness. But Louve's heart was hard. It was in that forest that I found three wolf cubs searching for the she-wolf, killed by a huntsman maybe, or else a forgetful dam. Jean called to his wolves by name and flung them large pieces of the boar's head, thereby encouraging them to leap around him with wide-open jaws, alarming the company, whose thoughts

were that the beautiful teeth could fix themselves easily in the human throat and tear out the windpipe. Be not afraid, be not afraid, cried Jean Guiscard, see how they love me; and he told how when hunting in the forest he was led by a deer who, though unable to outstrip his wolves, kept ahead of them, leading him farther and farther into the darkling forest till at last he came upon a ruin. Into it I went, my wolves following unwilling, so frightened were they by the silence. In one of the halls we found a company of old men sitting round a table. I called to them, but they did not give me an answer, my wolves howling all the while with fear, their tails between their legs. I could not quiet them, and it was then that it became plain that we were no longer in mortal company; we were with King Arthur and his Court. On the table was a sword and a horn, and I know not how it was, but it seemed that though no words were spoken I was bidden to take the sword and blow the horn, and at the sound of it the company vanished and the castle itself. More than that I do not know; memory of all else has been taken from me. I blew a call for my wolves, who had fled from me, and rising to my feet continued blowing the call till I reached my hermitage, and therein were my wolves, who, mistaking me for a stranger, leapt upon me, but were subdued by the sound of my voice. After I had fed them we sat together, myself in meditation with a great joy in my heart, for I knew I should be rewarded for my courage in blowing the fanfare on the horn, rewarded by King Arthur, whose lot it was to sit in that ruined hall as a punishment for his sins; for even King Arthur needed absolution, as we all do, my friends, myself more than any around me need it. Like King Arthur I am waiting for forgiveness to come from my lady, and if it comes not these wolves will give me the ease that the fanfare on the horn gave to King Arthur, for I shall disguise myself in a sheepskin, and the blood of

the sheep that I shall spill over the wool will guide these wolves to me ; and through brake and over fell they will hunt me to the door of my lady. But of what help will that be to thee or to her? Abélard asked. Wouldst, mayhap, plant the dagger of remorse in her heart? Not so, Jean Guiscard answered. If my wolves do not tear me to death before I am rescued by the lackeys, my lady will be forced to forgive and requite me for my love of her.

Jean Guiscard called for more wine, and having emptied the tankard that was handed to him he sat silent, and his grief was so great that none dared to break the silence of it. At last he began to speak : my lady has mooted that she will not forgive me until a hundred lovers and their mistresses come and implore it at her feet ; it is said that a hundred men and women will come but—— Thy songs, brother, will summon the necessary array of lovers from their castles, and the Courts of Love will compel her to clemency. Have good heart, brother. Without making any answer to them Jean Guiscard fell to drinking, and the company laid their heads together, certain and sure that France would not allow a great singer to be torn by wolves. The needed lovers and their mistresses would come and surround her castle. She could not refuse. Jean Guiscard brooded in goblets of wine, and the evening might have been plunged in the sadness of drunkenness if the gleemen and gleemaids from the neighbouring field had not come down to the *trouvères* to ask if they might rope in a certain space for a game of blind-man's buff ; and, permission being given to them, they passed a rope round the apple-trees, creating thereby a space of some twenty-five to thirty yards for the girls to run in and evade hoodman-blind as best they could, till wantonness on one side and trickery on the other brought a maiden into his hands. There were courses, timorous, courageous, witty and even chaste, the captor relinquishing his right

of search, and there were other courses in which the captor abused his right of search, prolonging it for his own sake rather than as a means of coming to an issue, the issue being the name of the captured. And the game reached its height when Jean Guiscard's eyes fell upon a girl whose shapes tempted him into the lists. Abélard and Rodebœuf sought to dissuade him, afraid that he would stumble and fall and hurt himself, but he gave a good chase, not falling too often, before he seized a leg which, he shouted, could belong to none but Mathilde. It did, and the pair were conducted to an arbour, serenades and reverdies being sung in their honour during their mutual enjoyment. Thou hast seen enough of this sport, I doubt not, Rodebœuf, said Abélard; my heart is away in Brittany and if it weren't I might be like another. So if thou'rt not minded to try thy luck in a course, let us to thy prize song, for if it is to be written we must write it now. I had forgotten my prize song, he answered; let us to it at once, else I hasten to Palestine. The riot continued in the garden, but so intent was Abélard on writing a poem that would save Rodebœuf from the Crusades that he was able to close his ears to the bleating of the goats; and he was awake at dawn struggling with rhymes, Rodebœuf unable to give or withhold his approval. Shall we try to finish this stanza now, or finish it after sleeping? Abélard asked, and while meditating some new versions of the recalcitrant stanza, both poets fell asleep for an hour, Abélard being the first to open his eyes, and seeing his friend still wrapped in slumber he went over to him. Awaken, Rodebœuf, to the consideration of the poem that may save thee from Palestine. Rodebœuf roused himself, and while Abélard put the finishing hand to the incomplete stanza, he bade his friend be of stout heart. This last stanza will decide the judges in thy favour, he said, though till they reach it they may have another poet in



mind. And with Abélard's poem in his pocket Rodebœuf departed, joyful, for Franchard, leaving Abélard to ponder the strange contrasts of Jean Guiscard's inner and outer life, so disparate that it was hard to remember him after last night's orgy as a gentle and beautiful poet, without jealousy, always ready to see the good rather than the bad in his fellow, to praise rather than to blame, who would be sure to try hard to have the prize awarded to his old friend, the Comte de Rodebœuf.

As he rode away to Blois, feeling himself to be as several and disparate as Jean Guiscard, though the terms were different (was he not going to Blois, forgetful of philosophy, to spend a week writing in various forms of metre and rhyme?), Abélard forgot suddenly all things but his rhymes and the great terrace overlooking the Sologne; for it was there he would write the songs in praise of Héloïse that were rising up in his mind, with which his mind brimmed and overflowed. A week of rhymes, he said, and I must return to Franchard to hear if my old friend is fated to fall by the Saracen's spear. If money runs short my poems will find me board and lodging; a sonnet for my bed, a ballade for my board; dawn song should be taken in exchange for a bottle of wine; and his face all in smiles he returned six days later through the pretty summer weather from Blois to Franchard, to learn from the folk that, so far as they knew, the Comte de Rodebœuf had not gained a prize. Abélard thanked them, and watching them depart for the fields, he fell to thinking of Mathieu stepping down the gangway of a ship bound for the Holy Land, and then of his poem that had been rejected for no reason that he was aware of, and he could not do else but suspect Jean Guiscard to be guilty of envy. But there was no way of discovering the truth unless he were to meet Rodebœuf again.

One day as he meditated in the shade of a wood by a

brook, he heard his name spoken, and looking up from the water he was watching he saw Rodebœuf himself. Good friend, said Abélard, I have come from Blois, where I spent a week writing poems, the best—— But I may not praise my poems, since the poem I wrote for thee failed to gain the prize. Thy poem, Rodebœuf answered, gained the prize; but I lost it. Thou speakest in riddles, said Abélard. One that is easily unriddled, replied Rodebœuf. One of the poets heard me learning thy poem, and becoming possessed of the music and the words he could not help himself from singing it, I not being present in the hall to protest, and it was whilst walking in the garden with a lutanist appointed to accompany me, studying how each phrase might be enhanced in the singing, that the story of my ill luck was broken upon me by the crowd coming from the hall bearing the false poet in a litter, crowned with the laurels that rightly belonged to me. It even behoved me to see him crowned with laurels and to hear him sing my poem to the crowd, for verily I believe he looked upon it as his own, so great is the power of self-love. Some of it was mine; but that many of the lines were thine robbed me of all power to claim it at the moment, and the ruling of the Vicomtesse de Chatelleraud was that my claim should have been made on the day of the competition. My disgrace is such that I must hie to Palestine without further delay; some great deed may blot out the memory of a disgraceful incident, and if that deed be not accomplished, why then death—— A sad story, good friend, and one common enough in this world, the false always being accepted rather than the true, and small satisfaction it is to us that the truth shall prevail in the end, Abélard said, looking up from the long, flowering grasses in which he was lying. A sad and humble countenance Rodebœuf wore, and Abélard was sorry for him. A dejected figure he stood in the sunny landscape, already on his way to

Palestine in his imagination, where the sky could hardly be bluer than the sky above the stream at whose edge he stood. A great eel wriggled its way from beneath the stone on which Rodebœuf was standing in the stream, and it and the silence and the shadows of the reeds in the water, and the birds coming to drink and going away again, perplexed them. A fish leaped, all was still again; but their hearts were not still, and the world began to seem a mockery to Abélard and Rodebœuf. But if that be so, God himself is part of the mockery. And while Abélard paused to consider this sudden thought he was startled by a step coming through the wood, and on looking up he saw an old man standing amid its fringes, whom he judged to be an inhabitant of the place, belike a hermit, though in many little ways he differed from the hermit who forsakes the world to meditate on the nature of the soul that God has given him and the nature of God.

Although an old man, he was of erect carriage, full of vigour and health, and his staff was not of the rough-and-ready kind that hermits make for themselves out of some dry branch, but shaped with craft, polished, ivory-headed. And Abélard tried in vain to associate him with some religious community, deciding quickly that he was not a Benedictine nor a Carthusian; and, rejecting the Carmelites, which next rose up in his mind, he fell to a closer examination of the intruder, perceiving him to be a tall man with sloping shoulders, inclined to bulk about the hips, one whose face was long, of the horse kind, but redeemed by an amiable forehead and lit with pale, ironical eyes that hinted a smile even when they ceased to smile. Abélard waited for a word from him, but he did not speak, and the twain began to take pleasure in his appearance, which was not disagreeable after the first glance. His quizzical eyes began to smile again, and it became a question which should speak first. Abélard and

Rodebœuf held their tongues by mutual consent, it seeming to them that the duty of finding the first words fell to the hermit, since he was a denizen of the woods and cliffs and they were but casual passengers; and while waiting for him to break the silence their thoughts were: with what phrase will he break it, and what will his voice be like? An engaging tenor voice was not expected, yet when it came it seemed the only voice that their hermit could speak suitably, and they were asked with much grace and courtesy if they were comers from the Court of Love which was now in session. At once Abélard began to speak of a great miscarriage of justice and was pointing to his friend, the Comte de Rodebœuf, when the old man said that he had not come from his cell to give ear to a case of injustice, but in the hope of hearing news of the Lady Malberge.

But you wear a puzzled look, good sir. As well I may, Abélard replied, for my friend and myself mistook you for a hermit come to live in a quiet wood that he might better meditate on the nature of his soul. Your guessing does you credit, sirs, the hermit answered. It was for naught else certainly that I came hither. None deserts the world but to come to terms with his soul. But the wood, good hermit, is not an hour's walk from a Court of Love, Abélard interposed; nor is this the whole of the paradox; the Christian hermits flee from the world to escape from thoughts of women, and do not leave their cells at the sound of footsteps and voices to enquire for news of them. Your views of hermits are narrow, said the old man, raising his hand some five or six inches higher up, thereby gaining a more picturesque attitude. If the Lady Malberge should be the hermit's soul, would you have him flee from the Court of Love in which she presides? The Lady Malberge the hermit's soul! Abélard muttered, and Rodebœuf awoke for a moment from his despondency. You will easily apprehend my philosophy,



or that science of life which I have come by, the hermit said. Harken! If we have a fair image in our minds always, the world passes away from us and a great part of ourselves; only what is most real in us remains. Rodebœuf would have moved on, for he was in no humour to listen to such discourses, but Abélard's religious curiosity obliged him to put further questions, and he asked the hermit what great spiritual crisis compelled him to live apart from the Lady Malberge, whom he understood to be none other than the Vicomtesse de Chatelleraud. But I do not live apart; she is always with me, and that she should never be far from me is my reason for having withdrawn myself from her. It was not fear of hell nor desire of heaven that drove you hither? said Abélard. By no means, good sir, the hermit answered, but that I might meditate upon the nature of my soul. But if, continued Abélard, becoming more and more interested, you are careless of heaven and hell, as though they concern you not—— I am afraid I do not understand you, good hermit. That may be, good sir, for you are unaware that I am Gaucelm d'Arembert, whose soul is well known to be the Lady Malberge. I cannot call my love of her anything else, for it abides when all other things have passed, and day by day it grows clearer to me and nearer to me, and the soul, we have always been told, is what is most essential in us. If that be so, and who will say it is not, Malberge is my soul, for nothing is essential in me except her. Without her I should not have been myself, and were she taken from me I should be nothing; therefore I say, and not without reason, it seems to me, that the Lady Malberge is my soul. Or my love of her is my soul, if your mood, sir, is to split hairs. But, said Abélard, the soul is all spirit. My love is all spirit, Gaucelm answered. Was your love then unfleshly? Abélard asked. By no means; it was in my lady's bed that I came to know myself. I was nothing before I

entered it, merely a man given over to vain commerce with every woman that took his fancy. And you have never wavered from your love? Abélard enquired. Wavered from my love? You might as well ask if I have wavered from my senses. All I see and hear is my Lady Malberge. She is the bird that sings within me; she is the fruit that I taste—— In memory, Abélard interposed. Memory is the truer reality, Gaucelm answered. She is the flower that I meet upon my way and that I gather, and for each flower I gather another springs up in its place, the same flower sometimes or else a more beautiful flower than the one I have gathered. And you are satisfied to live alone in this hermitage? Abélard asked. Why not? Gaucelm replied. My friends bring me food, and the birds and the beasts of the wood bring me entertainment. I have friends amongst them all. They share my meals with me, and when I am not with them I meditate, which reminds me that I must bid you good-bye, for the hour of my meditation has come. But, said Abélard, we regret to interrupt your meditations, but your knowledge of life is so instructive that we would wish to hear you on this subject to which you have dedicated your life. To which, Gaucelm answered, I would devote many lives, had I many for giving, for all that is not Malberge is death. Many of us live without suspicion of the real life. It was so with me; for twenty years I was without it, living on rinds and shucks and husks, but when I met Malberge I began to live the essential life. For ten years I have lived with her in what is known as reality, and ever since have been living it in a memory which is even sweeter than the reality. But how, good hermit, did this good fortune come about? Abélard asked. There were twenty years—— That I was without knowledge of Malberge, the hermit interrupted. Yes, if we begin to count our life from the eighteenth year, for I was thirty-eight before my eyes were won by

her beauty and my ears ravished by her voice, for Malberge's voice is—— Good hermit, tell us, Abélard intervened, of how you met the Lady Malberge. At a tournament it was, good sirs, in which another knight was to carry her colours; but after a few words with me her fancy changed, and she said that I should wear her colours; and when it was pointed out to her by her first husband (Malberge has been wedded twice), that she could not put aside the knight she had chosen, she answered him, saying: the tournament is given in my honour, therefore my mind may change as it pleases, and I will not sit on the balcony and watch the knights charging each other in the lists if Gaucelm d'Arembert does not wear my colours; here is my sleeve for him. And she cut her sleeve from her gown and gave it to me, and all were amazed. But she would have her way, and her sleeve pinned upon my arm gave it such great favour that I overthrew all. That day none could withstand my prowess. And next day when I went to the Lady Malberge to return to her her sleeve, she raised her face to mine, and when our lips met in a kiss all my nature took fire, and the flame that was lighted that day shall never be quenched.

The fire still smoulders under the ashes of many years; stir it and it will flame again. Your questions bring it all back to me, and that is why I have not sent you away and retired into meditation of the great benefits I have received from my dear lady. But how, good hermit, did it fall out, Abélard asked, that on the death of her first husband, or divorce, whichever happened that separated them one from another, you did not wed the Lady Malberge? Our wedding was often in our minds, but I felt, and Malberge shared my belief, that love could not exist in marriage, and I said to her: Malberge, if I wed thee thou wilt hate me in six months, but if we are wise and stint our desires to blessed adultery, our love shall

last to the end of our lives. Ponder well before thou choosest another husband; and to the best of my power I did advise the Lady Malberge in her choice, and the Vicomte de Chatelleraud has proved worthy of the confidence that I placed in him.

For two years during the life of her first husband I lived in the memory of my last meeting with Malberge, and each time I entered the Lady Malberge's bed it seemed to me more clear than the last time that it was not a mortal woman I lay down beside, but divinity, Venus herself, and our union was, or seemed to me to be, which is the same thing, a sacramental deed, in harmony with the universe and part of it. You will think me mad, good sirs, but that is a matter for your concern rather than mine, whose only care now is to discover the truth about myself and the Lady Malberge—my foible, and the last one. A pleasure it is to speak of her to you, for I am without any company except the birds and the beasts of these woods, and the castle servants, who bring me presents of food from Malberge, and the peasants from whom I buy it, therefore I thank you for having allowed me the privilege of speaking the truth to you. Does Malberge come to visit you here in your hermitage? Does she sit and talk with you of the days when you loved each other? Abélard asked. Malberge, the hermit answered, speaks very little of the days when we loved each other, and methinks she cares little to hear me remind her of them; but she comes to see me and I possess her affection, and there is little that I might ask that she would not do for me. And never during all those years did another woman tempt you? Rodebœuf enquired, feeling that he had been for a long time like one forgotten. My good sir, he who has enjoyed divinity turns aside from merely mortal woman. And was Malberge as faithful to you, sir, as you were to her? Rodebœuf asked. Eighteen years lay between me and Malberge. She was twenty when I



was thirty-eight, and her imagination was as mine was in my youth. Men captured her imagination as women captured mine. Thou wilt not chide me if I spend part of to-morrow with a certain knight? she said to me. And I answered: Malberge, I hear thee with a certain sorrow, but thou canst not be else than what thou art, and if thou wert else I might not love thee. So be thyself. My prudence was rewarded, for after a very little while she quitted the new knight. It has fallen out that Malberge has wept naked in my arms, telling me that I must help her to obtain some man who had caught her fancy, reminding me of our long love, her tears flowing on her cheeks. Thou wilt help me, she has said, for I must have both of you. One is not enough, I must have both, I must live with both of you; and on these words she surrendered her beautiful body to me and her tears were forgotten. A strange lady was thine, good hermit, one such as we have never heard of before, cried Rodebœuf. And now, said Abélard, you have set up a hermitage in her domain, and she holds a Court of Love at Chatelleraud? Yes; and sometimes I mingle with the crowd and catch sight of her, and sometimes a whim brings her here to me, and I look upon my life as it has come to me through Malberge as a perfect gift. My death, which cannot be far away now, only affects me in this much, that I shall not see Malberge any more; and not seeing her, I shall be indifferent to all things after death as I am during life, indifferent to all things but Malberge.

And on these words Gaucelm d'Arembert turned away, thinking that he had said enough. But Abélard detained him still and said: you, who have found a perfect answer to the riddle of life, may counsel me in my distress, which is a sore one. Better counsellor than you I shall never find, good hermit. Not so, good sir, no man can advise

another ; wisdom is a gift that we bring into the world, and what we bring with us we may not pass on to another. If we could, we should be angels by this time. Return to your business, whatever it may be. If poet or philosopher, return to poetry or philosophy, or to both, or to wedded life, or to adulterous if you be a lover. You have detained me long enough ; my meditations, too long delayed, must be begun. Good-bye, sirs.

### CHAP. XXIII.

A FEW minutes after his dismissal, Abélard and Rodebœuf returned through the wood seeking Gaucelm's hermitage, and when they came upon it they cried : will you, good sir, delay your meditations a few moments to hear a great miscarriage of justice at the Court of Love presided over by the Lady Malberge ? And Gaucelm answered : any story that concerns the Lady Malberge I will listen to willingly and with gratitude. Abélard then told how a valuable prize had been given, not to the man who wrote the poem and composed the music, but to a man who had learned it from another as a parrot learns. Gaucelm listened with an attention and interest in the story that persuaded Abélard he would use his influence with the Lady Malberge to have the decision of the Court reversed and the prize taken away from him who had stolen it. But in this he was mistaken. Gaucelm was averse to Abélard's plan that he should go to the Court and tell the story to the Lady Malberge herself, or at least say that he believed the story to be true, and that a test might be put which would discover the truth. The rival singers might be asked to add a verse, and in the added verse the true authorship of the poem would appear. The test that you propose to me is ingenious and has my sympathy, good sirs, but I have removed my-

self from the world, and to see the Lady Malberge among the great assembly would be painful to me and distract my thoughts from herself. For she has no real being except in me ; she is here, and nowhere else, and the hermit pointed to his heart. Abélard heard Rodebœuf sigh and move away, for with the hermit's refusal to intervene he knew that his last hope of gaining the prize was lost. Your words, Gaucelm, leave us no hope, but the trouvère who was once you would like to hear the song. And Gaucelm signifying that he had no reason for not listening for a few moments longer, Abélard said : my friend has moved away into the wood, and I have no lute. There is one in my cell, the hermit said ; I will fetch it. Thank you, Gaucelm, for your lute, and now I will sing you the song that gained the prize.

The first preliminary chords called forth a few words of praise from the hermit, who said : I hear plainly that you are among the first of lute-players, good sir. And Abélard answered : I was thought to be such when a gleeman in Rodebœuf's service. Abélard continued playing a little while on the lute and then began his song, which Gaucelm listened to devoutly, religiously, for he was listening to words and music that had charmed the Lady Malberge. Whatever the song was he would have admired it for that reason, enough reason for him, and in consideration of the pleasure that it had given him, he asked Abélard why he had abandoned lute-playing. For philosophy, my good sir, I laid the lute aside ; I am Pierre Abélard, of whom you have heard, no doubt. But Gaucelm's face told Abélard that he had not heard the name before, and to pass over an awkward moment Abélard began to tell of his love for a girl whom he had left with his relatives at Tours. She is with child by me, he exclaimed, in the hope of capturing the hermit's attention. But Gaucelm was too deeply engaged with his own dreams to hear him, and with an absent-minded

air he asked, after a long silence, what Abélard's reasons were for abandoning music for dialectics. I heard, he said, the word philosophy and also the word gleeman, and from your lute-playing and your singing I judged that you were on the way to becoming a trouvère. You should have been content with your lute-playing and left dialectics to others; they are the web that the spider weaves to trap unwary flies. In reply to another question — why did he leave Rodebœuf's service? — Abélard answered that though at first Rodebœuf and himself seemed to be at one with regard to music and poetry, in the second year of his service differences arose, for whereas it seemed to Abélard that the business of the melody was to express as far as possible the meaning of the words, the taste of Rodebœuf, who was more musician than poet, was to adorn his tunes, not only his own tunes, but mine, said Abélard, with grace notes, appoggiaturas and slurred intervals. At first our differences were slight, and it amused us to wrangle over an art that was dear to both of us; but in the second year we wearied of our differences, and one day, owing to his insistence regarding devices which seemed to me useless, if not ridiculous, we came to words, and exasperated beyond endurance I rode away from his castle, angry with myself and poetry, my thoughts returning to dialectics, which for two years I had almost forgotten.

Abélard waited with some curiosity for the hermit's answer, but Gaucelm could not abstract himself from his thoughts, and his absent-mindedness was so apparent that Abélard began to wonder if the story he had told of the reasons which prevented him from remaining in Rodebœuf's service was already forgotten. Not quite forgotten, he gathered, for after excusing himself for his dreams, Gaucelm sought in his memory, and discovering therein the name of Rodebœuf, he said: have you re-entered his service? The great Comte de Rodebœuf is without lands, and



having failed to gain the prize with his poem, will join the next Crusade, Abélard answered. And yourself? Gaucelm asked. You wear a mask of youth, but masks never quite shut out the truth. Good health and good living and abstemiousness hid the forties for a while from me, but my eyes begin to descry your years and they put them at thirty-eight. Two years short of my years, which are forty, Abélard replied, too old to start a *trouvère's* life again. A *trouvère's* life does not include many years beyond thirty. It is true my years were thirty-eight when I met the Lady Malberge the first time, and despite my age our love was prolonged till her mother began to say that Malberge was no longer as young as she used to be, said Gaucelm. Was it for words spoken by her mother that you ceased—— I have never ceased to love Malberge, Gaucelm answered, and if I remember her mother's words it is for that they were spoken at the close of my forty-eighth year, when I was no longer young in love as I used to be. And one more question I would put to you—did you never wish to wed Malberge? Many times, Gaucelm answered; but held my tongue between my teeth. And Malberge? Abélard asked. Only once did she speak of marriage; it was, if I remember rightly, soon after the death of her first husband, during the first week of her widowhood, and for answer I took her hand in mine and said: wouldst sacrifice our love, Malberge? And so that the thought might not trouble her again, I spoke to her of all the men we knew, discarding them one after another, till at last a name came up, and we agreed that that was the husband decreed for her by social convenience. Nor did my judgment fail us, for her marriage is spoken of around the beautiful country of Chatelleraud as the most admirable in Touraine. We were the wise ones of the earth, who knew that love does not exist in marriage from the beginning. She has laid to heart your teaching, noble hermit, Abélard replied, and he told of the lady who had

promised her love to a knight should she ever find herself out of love ; on her marriage she had fallen out of love and must recompense her swain. Such, good hermit, was the Lady Malberge's ruling at the Court of Love now in session at the Castle of Franchard, said Abélard.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

HE had not left the hermit's cell many hours before he was overtaken by a sense of resentment against this hermitage ; and the hermit's colloquies, his polished staff of rare wood, his lute, his theories and doctrines, became suddenly abhorrent. The sham, the fraud, the falseness ! But after all, he said, stopping in the middle of a glade, all they say and do is their truth, so why am I angry ? It may be that Gaucelm did well to turn aside from marriage. But I am not Gaucelm ; and with clouded countenance and angry mien he crossed the glade hurriedly, finding a path on the other side that led him out of the wood into the beauty of a summer day.

The sun has not yet gone, for there are shadows and lights, but my heart tells me it must be near the sunset, for there is no hour of the day or night when we are possessed of such peace as now. In this persuasive hour our enemies are indifferent to us, almost forgotten, and our friends are far away, like the clouds. Like the sky, life is serene, inimitable, and the rich country of the Touraine, full of trees and corn and vines, lies before me league after league, watered by the great river hidden from my eyes now, but which I can see with my mind's eye driving its straight, shallow course towards the sea. The Loire winds less than any river, he said, and now it is blue in the sunset and the swallows flit over the great sandy reaches under the arches of the bridges, and thousands are high in the air. A land of corn and sand and wine is this country,

and of Héloïse, he cried, for these things would be nothing to me without her. And he recalled those grassy islands she would pass by, filled with drowsy cattle brought over in boats to feed, the river growing deeper on its way to Nantes, where it became an estuary. As he walked his thoughts passed from Nantes to Paris, to Fulbert ! before whom he would have to appear sooner or later. At the thought of the meeting from which he could not escape, the beautiful evening, lighted by the long rays of the setting sun, darkened, and, with all the summer landscape, was blotted from his eyes, the hermit in the wood, Rodebœuf, the Court of Love, even Héloïse, for he was unhappy in his own heart ; and the world is naught but ourselves, as the oldest philosopher tells and the newest.

He went his way, but with a drop of poison in his heart. Sometimes the poison was active, sometimes latent, but it was always there ; and nothing could set him free but Fulbert's death, which was not to be counted on, and his reason told him that the sooner he went to Paris the easier would be the encounter. But his instinct was more powerful than his reason, and he stayed in the pleasant country of the Touraine, putting off the inevitable hour, finding some relief in the thought that the spell of circumstance would propel him to Fulbert. It is pleasanter to be propelled than to come to a decision, he said, smiling at the vein of inconsequence he had come upon in his character. To escape from himself he composed, and sometimes a whole day passed without a thought of Fulbert coming into his mind, and it was not till the end of September, towards the close of the summer season, at the moment of the great stillness when Nature seems to prepare herself for her long winter sleep, that he rode a tired horse from a village distant about thirty leagues through the half-rural, half-urban district known as the Lombard, past gardens and through lanes, the fields breaking into view with white oxen ploughing towards the headland just as of yore. He

never forgot how his tired, listless horse, on approaching Paris—within half-a-league of the city—pricked up his ears and began to trot, scenting a stable. Or maybe he recognises the bells of Saint-Germains-l'Auxerrois and Saint-Gervais, said Abélard. Anon the bells of Notre-Dame came into the ear, with the bells of the left bank answering them, sweet, reciprocating chimes: Abélard knew them all, far and near, distinguishing the deeper resonances of Notre-Dame from the chimes of such late castings as the bells of Sainte-Geneviève. The bells in the east are the bells of Saint-Victor, and those in the west are the bells of Saint-Germains-des-Prés. How beautiful is the reverberation in the still morning air, he said, and fell to thinking of the many churches on either bank of the Seine, enumerating fifteen as he crossed the Little Bridge, saying to himself: in Paris at last! It is good to depart, else we should not know the pleasure of return, he continued, reining up his horse that he might hearken to the different cries. Wake up, gentlemen, cried the bath-keeper, and come to your baths; the baths are ready, gentlemen. Jackets and cloaks to be sold, cried the tailor, he who lacks a cloak is cold to-day; fur cloaks mended, winter will soon be here again. Candles brighter than a thousand stars, cried the chandlers. Good wine at thirty-two, at sixteen, at twelve, at six and a half ha'pence a quart, cried the wine merchants. How pleasant it is to be in Paris again. Ah, if it were not for Fulbert—— Abélard muttered, and rode on again.

Again his heart failed him, and he rode his tired horse round the city so that he might reconsider what he would say to Fulbert, when a well-known voice hailed him. About so early, Mangold, he said, and the disciple, laying hold of his master's stirrup leather, walked alongside of him, telling him that the heat of the night had kept him awake for hours, and that an unneighbourly neighbour's dog barked all the morning. So I betook myself from my



bed, saying that I would at least enjoy the new-born day, and have been recompensed, as you see, sir. But whence have you come? A long way, judging by the horse you ride; poor beast, he can hardly put one foot before the other. I will get off his back, Abélard answered; it is painful to see him, so tired is he; ten leagues to-day was his faring, and on other days seven. We have come from Tours. Let us to your lodging, master, for you would doubtless hear the news from me, and it is as well you should hear it. Hast then bad news for me? Abélard asked. Of the news you will judge yourself, master; let us hasten. But we're here, cried Abélard, and giving his horse to an ostler he bade him take great care of him, saying: he deserves it, having carried me from Tours to Paris in five days. And then, laying his hand on Mangold's shoulder, he said: it is of Fulbert thou wouldst speak to me? Mangold answered: in Latin, when the doors are closed. So serious as that then? Abélard answered. And returning from the door, he said: tell me. When Fulbert returned from Soissons, Mangold said, and found his niece gone, he was nigh to losing his wits in grief, and has been good for little else since. For so much I can vouch, for I have seen and passed a few words with Fulbert, but the stories that are put about may be inventions to work you ill, master; we are quick to answer: these stories are lies, but the gossips answer us: where is he? Why—— So it is well that I have come back to silence my enemies, Abélard interposed; and to do this well let me hear what the gossips have to say against me. What is said to-day, master, may be truth, Mangold answered; but the gossips are busy fabling the story that during Fulbert's absence at Soissons you and Héloïse and the servant Madelon rode away together over the Little Bridge in the direction of Orléans. How the story came to be put about, we don't know; it may be false that you—— It is not false, Abélard answered, but relate

the story. What is said is that Fulbert returned from Soissons in a peaceful and happy mood, stopping to view the shops, passing on till he came to the river, turning the corner, for, you see, his house faces the river—I know it well, Abélard said, continue—unsuspicious of what had befallen him till, seeing his door open and children playing within his threshold, he began to wonder how such disorder had come to pass. The children could tell him nothing, and it is said that he wandered on from room to room, finding at last a letter from Héloïse telling that she had gone to Brittany. They are six days' journey ahead of me, he is reported as saying; and catch them up I cannot, horse-riding being unsuited to my time of life. But whatever his thoughts were at first, they soon began to leave him, and it is known of a certainty that he came out of his house like one daft, whose senses had left him.

It is the wonder of all that he did not walk into the river, for it was many hours before he knew where he was going, and would never have known had he not been met by friends who led him home and cared for him, for the man was by turns desperate and silly. It is said that for many days he did not know what he was saying, but sat mumbling like one whose wits have gone no whither that he knows, but though it is certain that he was without his wits for a while, it is true that he is as sane to-day as you and I. One thing I have forgotten, that his grief for Héloïse, his niece, is not greater than his grief for Madelon, a servant devoted to him for twenty years or more, and that the words most frequently in his mouth are: had Abélard left me Madelon I might have forgiven him the theft that love urged upon him, for love is a hard taskmaster, as all men know, but when the belly suffers the heart is hard. Such is the gossip of the city; but I doubt if it be more than folk-wit, for another story is about that he has been seen in converse with the old

assassin of the mountains to whose orders all the cut-purses of the city are obedient. Indeed I have heard as much as that he was remarked waiting at the corner of the rue Coupe-Gueule.

Abélard listened without speaking, and when Mangold ceased speaking he rose to his feet and paced the room. So it is well indeed that you came early in the morning, Mangold continued; and that I met you, for I have told you all, omitting nothing, and it is for you, master, to pick and choose and devise means of escape. This much of the story is certain, said Abélard, that Fulbert is brooding revenge. He is brooding a plan of revenge, Mangold answered, and how he may get his niece back again, for it is said that he intends to send to Brittany hirelings who will break into whatever house Héloïse may be hiding in, and carry her off to some place chosen and devised by him. The money to do the deed will come out of the coffers of the Church, so it is said. The Church is on his side, Abélard answered, for he is Canon of Notre-Dame, and even my faint adherence to the accursed doctrine is spoken of as heretical. In these days whatever doctrine one sets forth, Abélard continued, somebody is ready to declare it a heresy. But Héloïse must not be robbed from me, and I thank thee, Mangold, for thy words, for they are as a sword in my hand. To know who are my enemies, and their plans, is the way to victory. I thank thee, Mangold. But do not leave me; we'll eat together in an hour's time. Now I must write a long letter to Brittany, telling that I have just heard of Fulbert's project to send a force of men to carry off Héloïse, and that it might be well to hide her in the forest over against Clisson: in those caves known only to ourselves, mayhap. But stopping suddenly, he said: no, I will not write, for the messenger may betray me, if I should find one. A better plan will be to go this very hour, before resting and eating and

drinking, to Fulbert. What thinkest thou, Mangold, that I am putting my head into a noose, or taking it out of one? Mangold seemed unwilling to answer, and Abélard had to press him to do so. I am not sure, he said; and when one is not sure advice is more than ever useless. Not sure, Abélard answered, that I would save myself from the assassination which was in my mind just now? Hast forgotten the tryst at the corner of the rue Coupe-Gueule? Such talk, Mangold replied, was repeated so that you should know all, master. Did I not say as well that it was but the chatter of the folk going to and fro about their business, hardly knowing what they were saying? Abélard replied: but where there is smoke there soon will be a fire. Why not quench the smouldering thought, and by doing so gain for myself that which my heart most desires—Héloïse? A plain imagination, and I await thy answer. Since you press me for an answer, master, there is one ready. The light that God called, a light such as yours, belongs to all the world; for a thousand years the world has waited, since Plato and Aristotle, and now you would throw God's gift aside for a girl's face! My good Mangold, Abélard said, in a chastened tone, even though all thou sayest be true, and that I have come to speak a truth that will set many ignorant centuries behind us, for ever behind us, how, I would ask thee, would my marriage affect the truth? Not for me, master, nor for the few who love the truth for itself, but how many truth-lovers are there in this world of ours, and the celibate has always had more power than the married. Why that should be I know not, but is it not so?

Abélard rose to his feet suddenly, and walked to and fro without speaking, Mangold's eyes always upon him, for the disciple saw that the master was perturbed. Mangold, he said at last, if it should be as thou sayest, if men should prefer the appearance to the reality——Jesus had no wife, Paul had none, nor had Buddha, but



Socrates had, cried Mangold, and we know the trouble and the ridicule she brought upon him and perhaps his death, for she made him seem contemptible. Abélard remained deep in his thoughts for what seemed a long while to Mangold, and then, coming to a sudden decision, his instinct breaking through his reason, he said: my heart tells me the truth; I must go and claim her who belongs to me by right and only to me. God did not create this unity for nothing. Mangold, thy judgment of me comes out of a different experience. Thy youth—thou art still in it—has not passed like mine in repression. Thou goest from one girl to another joyously, with niches in thy heart for all, but in my heart there was only one niche, and I will go to her uncle to claim her, so no more. I shall find thee here when I return, and we will take food together then; and I will tell thee of Fulbert, how we met and how we parted and on what terms.

He left the room abruptly, and looking from the window Mangold saw Abélard hastening along, the passengers saluting him as he passed, recognising, as Mangold's heart said, the philosopher of all time. But Abélard had no thought of philosophy in his heart, which was full of Héloïse, and he hastened on, answering the salutations as he crossed the island, keeping out of sight of the ecclesiastics whom he saw collected round the church of Notre-Dame. Before it is known I have returned I must see Fulbert; should he be away from Paris I must follow him. So did he speak to himself as he hastened down the rue des Chantres, his heart beating quickly on reaching the doorstep, his voice agitated when he answered the servant: tell the Canon that I am bringing him news of his niece and he will see me. On hearing this, without asking leave from her master she let Abélard into the house, and knowing it well, he ran before her and threw open the door of the room in which he expected to find Fulbert, saying: sir, I have come

with news of your niece and to ask your forgiveness for not having brought it before, the journey being so long from Brittany.

Fulbert started at the sound of Abélard's voice and his face enflamed with hatred, and Abélard had need of all his courage to face the old man who sat looking at him saying nothing. Sir, though I have been in Paris but an hour, I have heard already of your grief, and I find you bowed in affliction. But your niece is well; she is safe with my people in Brittany. With thy people in Brittany! Fulbert answered, starting to his feet; and thou darest to come hither to ask my forgiveness for the seduction of my niece? I believed thee to be a continent man, who would teach her philosophy; a learned companionship I foresaw, and was deceived. All that you can say, sir, is known to me, and it has been a great grief to me during the journey to Brittany, and the journey back from Brittany. A grief to thee, Abélard? Add not hypocrisy to lechery, the Canon answered. Lechery there is none, sir, for the love that I bear for your niece is as pure as any man ever bore for woman. And all my erring, though I would not condone it, seems to me condemned somewhat harshly, men having sinned since the beginning of time, men and women together, each as culpable as the other. Even though, the Canon said, the seducer be forty and the girl be sixteen! Thy crime, Abélard, will stink in the nostrils of all men, and it is to beg me not to make known thy shame and hers that thou art here, for no better reason. But there is no better reason, or worse reason; get beyond my house at once! cried the Canon. I pray you, sir, Abélard answered, as he went towards the door, to believe that I love your niece purely as a man loves a girl who is going to become his wife. The Canon remained silent, and Abélard stood watching him, wondering of what he was thinking. I have come to ask her hand in holy wedlock, Abélard

repeated. Her hand in holy wedlock! the Canon said, starting out of his reverie. My hope is that by this marriage I may obtain your forgiveness, sir. Fulbert rose to his feet and crossed the room, thinking, and then coming back he stood looking into Abélard's face, and Abélard, mistaking his scrutiny for lack of belief in his sincerity, began to fear that he would not be able to convince the Canon that he had come to him with an honourable proposal. Your face tells me, he said, that you do not believe me. But why should you disbelieve me, knowing your niece as you do? In what other woman should I find her qualities, her wit, her learning, her beauty?—for she has beauty. But it is not for me to praise her charms. I have come to ask her hand in marriage. Thou hast come, the Canon replied, with fair words, which I find hard to believe at this moment, for I have in mind, and intensely at this moment, the deception practised on me in this room. There is no need to ask me to remember, sir; it is not likely that I have forgotten anything. But I have come to ask you for your niece's hand in marriage. And Abélard watched the Canon's face, not liking it but too absorbed in his own thoughts and interests to read it truly. I cannot give thee an answer now, the Canon said at last; come back to me in a week's time. There is one condition, Abélard interjected. Ah, there are conditions? the Canon said. There are stumbling-blocks in every treaty, Abélard replied. Treaty? the Canon repeated; I do not like the word. You know, sir, that my pupils and disciples will not look upon my marriage favourably, for celibacy has always been looked upon as the natural state of philosophers and teachers, and the one condition that I would make is that our marriage shall remain secret. A secret marriage? the Canon said. For how long wouldst thou have the secret kept, Abélard? We cannot pry into the future too closely, we must leave the future to decide

the things of the future for us, Abélard answered. But I would like to meet you on that point; let it be Héloïse herself who shall decide when our marriage shall be made public. Thou hast come to me, Abélard—I say it again—with a fair proposal, and I must put aside my own feelings and distrust of thee. I must act as reason tells me I should act. Thou wouldst wed my niece? It is a pity that thou didst not do so before, but, as thou sayest, regrets are vain, and I must not allow my natural anger to interfere with her fortune. She loves thee, and therefore would marry thee, and no more remains for me to say than that, it being thy wish and her wish, my consent will not be withheld. But I too have a condition to impose, and it is that we enter into a pact before witnesses. Thou shalt bring three of thy friends here and I shall bring three of my friends. Would it not be better, sir, Abélard said, that this promise remain secret between us two? My niece, Abélard, is a charge that I have received from my dead brother, Philippe, and he speaks through me; and I believe now that, despite the past, thou comest here as a brave and loyal man, but my brother whispers: a bond, a bond! Thy friends will not reveal the marriage, nor will mine, for if it were known, as thou sayest, thy position as a philosopher and teacher would not be the same as that of a celibate. The Church in her wisdom has made priests celibates for no other reason than that the world in its instinct believes the truth, that the married man is always implicated in sensual interests. Therefore thy marriage shall be kept secret till my niece desires to make it known. In my turn, Canon, I say that you meet me with fair words; and nothing will be said by you or done by you to injure my position during the months that must elapse before we are wedded? Months! the Canon said; why should months elapse? And Abélard answered: we are now in autumn and the road to Brittany and back is a journey of many weeks. That is true, and



if she be with child—— Yes, sir, she is with child, Abélard said ; and now, sir, you will not refuse me your hand ? We will take hands when we meet here next week to enter into a covenant, Fulbert answered, and Abélard, feeling that nothing more remained to be said, bowed acquiescence and returned to Mangold, and related all he had said to the Canon and the answer he had gotten. Is a marriage ever secret ? Mangold asked, and Abélard said : now, Mangold, there is no other way but the secret marriage. On one side I am threatened with assassination if I do not marry, and on the other with the loss of all I have worked for these many years if I do marry. Thou wilt come to the meeting, and after it thou wilt be better able to judge the Canon. I will come to the meeting, Mangold answered.

## CHAP. XXV.

A FEW days afterwards the Canon's three friends and Abélard's met to draw a covenant between Fulbert and Abélard, and the terms of it were that Fulbert should give his niece in marriage to Abélard, and that the marriage should take place in Paris, in a church chosen by Fulbert himself, at the beginning of next year, as soon as Héloïse was able to travel ; and that if any of the six witnesses present were to die in the meantime, the five or four or three that remained should nominate others by mutual agreement ; and that the marriage should be kept secret, and that the twain should live apart, without seeing each other, Héloïse with her uncle, and Abélard in his lodging as heretofore till such time as Héloïse should think meet for the advertisement of the marriage, and that till that day and afterwards Canon Fulbert should keep himself from any act or word that might prejudice

Abélard in the eyes of the world, and speak of him always with deference and courtesy.

After the signing of the covenant Fulbert and Abélard embraced, promising fealty to each other, and the friends delayed at the street corner to rejoice together that their efforts had been successful, saying that a great scandal had been averted and a great philosopher preserved to the world. The belief of all was that Abélard would respect the covenant, and would go to Brittany to bring back Héloïse and wed her according to the terms laid down; the doubt, for one loitered in their minds as they turned to go their different ways, was the wisdom of a secret marriage; each of the six witnesses was certain that he would not betray the secret, but none was sure that Fulbert would overcome the temptation to harm Abélard, which he could do after the marriage more easily even than before. The success or failure of their enterprise lay in the character of Fulbert himself, and who could foresee so deep into a man's character? He had signed the covenant in good faith, but would he think the same after his niece's marriage as he thought before it? A riddle to himself and to others is every man. And it was with these thoughts in their minds that the six witnesses watched Fulbert's conduct during the winter of eleven hundred and eighteen and the spring of eleven nineteen.

It proved itself to be all they could wish for, as much as they hoped and even more, for Fulbert spoke no word against Abélard, whose success in the cloister during the winter was greater than ever, students coming to him from all parts of Europe, adding to the perennial question: was Abélard greater than Plato and Aristotle, the still more interesting question: in what part has he hidden Héloïse? some averring that he had taken her away to England, others saying that she was in his own country, Brittany; and into these inventions a curious folk-tale was embroidered, it being said that Héloïse, having received instruc-

tion in Nominalism, was teaching the new philosophy in Brittany, and for so doing was to be burnt at the stake; the fact that she didn't know the Breton language (though often pointed out) was easily slurred till the explanation came that she had learnt Breton from a Breton nurse. But the Parisians could not discover any clue to Fulbert's attitude towards Abélard, to the courtesy with which he spoke of him, and his admiration of his talent. Paris could not do else but expatiate in wonder, for the love adventure was a plume of finer shape and hue than those that Abélard had worn hitherto so gallantly. So when at the beginning of spring he disappeared suddenly without telling anyone whither he was going, the gossips began afresh, telling, whenever two or three came together, that Abélard had gone, forsooth, to fetch Héloïse out of her hiding, to bring her back his wife; and the jealous answered: who then will care for him and his philosophy?

And Abélard himself as he journeyed through the Orléans forest, accompanied now by a guard of six hirelings, often bethought himself of what Héloïse had said to him, that there was no advancement for a man outside of the Church. But if he were to take Orders, his life would no longer be a chain of madcap, happy adventures, which it had been till now, but mere developments and analysis of received opinions, and he hated to think of himself as an animal at tether, moving circlewise, always equidistant from the centre, never able to project himself even a few feet farther into the unknown. Already the tether rope was taut; he would wed Héloïse in disappointment, for there could be no further advancement for him except in the Church, she thought, and he recalled her comely head and her grey, idealistic eyes that always seemed to be looking into thoughts and dreams rather than at things. He was not a man for her, despite her passion, but an ambition; and if he had not met her his life would have continued to be an ever-swirling adventure. But in every

life there is an adventure that sums up the lesser adventures, and Héloïse was this summary, this abridgment, this compendium of life. His life would have been but the waving of a flag without her, and he could hardly doubt that she was thrown across his path for a purpose, a divine purpose mayhap.

And certain of the watchfulness of his guard, Abélard rode through the forest in meditation, his men choosing shorter roads and paths than those he had taken a year ago. Héloïse had come into his life when he was thirty-eight! Until this last year his life had been in his own hands, directed by himself, but in this last year he had lost control of his life and it was now rolling down a steep hill, carried along swiftly and more swiftly by its own weight—whither? Into some valley, in whose quiet his life would continue in that content which comes to every man and every thing in the end. On looking still further into his mind he began to perceive that no more than a seat in the runaway carriage was allotted to him; he did not wish to steer to the right or to the left, or to stop; if he wished anything, it was to increase the pace that he was going: to be happy in Héloïse's arms if he could, or to be unhappy, no matter, but to be in her arms. He began to count the days, and broke off short in his count, for it was by no means sure that she would love him, robbed, bereft of his ambition, for, rightly or wrongly, that was how she would view his marriage, saying again, as she had said before: outside the Church there is no advancement. But is there any real advancement within the Church? She would tell him that with marriage his career was ended, and that knowledge might kill her love. The word kill recalled his danger; Mangold's words were that Fulbert was plotting to get his revenge and might get it through assassination, and this fate he had only escaped by covenanting that he should marry Héloïse. Strange it was that in this covenant Héloïse had never



been considered, not even by him, who knew that her wish was that he should enter the Church; and he asked himself in vain if his fear of falling by the hands of Fulbert's assassins compelled him to accept Fulbert's terms without adding: if they be agreeable to Héloïse. It was not fear of his life that had induced him to forgo such proviso; what was it then? Abélard asked himself. How different, he cried, is this journey from the first journey, before we were afraid of Fulbert! We are not afraid of him now; it is of ourselves that we are afraid.

It would have been almost a relief to him to learn that some internal commotion of the earth had diverted the sand in the river disadvantageously, and that no ship could pass Blois, for then at least it would not be his hand but the hand of God that stayed his purpose. But alas, a ship was unfurling its sails when he arrived at Orléans, the skipper speaking of unfavourable winds, and Abélard said: the wind that took us to Tours was favourable throughout. And they had barely passed Meung when the ship drifted on a sandbank, and at Beaugency the wind blew up the river with such force that they had to lie by. Two days later they reached Blois. After Blois was Tours, after Tours was Nantes. In a few hours, he said, I shall be in her arms, and happiness will begin again, for nothing matters but Héloïse. The words sounded in his mind like an oracle, and he asked himself again and again if he were speaking the truth to himself. For was he sure that his career had lost, if not all, some of its attraction? Was he sure that he had ever put philosophy above minstrelsy? But of what use, he said, to torment myself with questions that I cannot answer and that time will soon answer?

His thoughts broke off suddenly, for it had come into his mind that it would not be well to speak to Héloïse at once of the covenant. Not, he said, before some days, at the end of the period, the week of love that I have promised myself, and to which I have looked so eagerly.

On the morning of our departure the words should be spoken: Héloïse, thou must come with me to Paris to be wedded, for—— Now what reason can I give for this wedding to which she is opposed? Not the threat of assassination, for that would be a faint-hearted argument to use to convince her. The child, he said, must have a father; he cannot remain a bastard; and thoughts of his child blended with the familiar aspects of the road, every turn of which he knew, with the size and shape of every field, each tumbling wall, every wood, almost every tree, with the walls and towers of the city he was born in. At the next bend of the road they will appear, he said, and he waited for the sight of them with a growing irritation in his heart, for Brittany was instinctively alien to him, and he remembered once again how he had made his lands over to his brothers and sisters in the hope that he might thereby escape from Brittany for ever. Is it not strange, he said to himself, that what I love best in the world should bring me back to the country most antagonistic to me and my ideas, and reining in his horse he pondered in front of the city on hatred and love, asking himself which was the deeper feeling. But the stout towers and walls of Le Pallet were not favourable to abstract thinking, and he was very soon among the early days of his childhood, when Le Pallet was ravaged by the Normans and great clearances of forest were made by the Bretons to avoid being surprised by their enemies. The great round tower of the castle showed against a strip of reddening sky, and he called to mind the house in which he was born, the market-place, the streets in which he had played as a child, and the walls, every stone of which he knew, riding by Le Pallet, however, without knocking at its gate, his thoughts set on the valley farm, on the few dozen elm-trees that sheltered the stead from the west wind, and of all, on the great well, a hundred feet deep or more, into which the serving-women let down a

bucket by a chain. The grey-green stones, the dim water below, his fears of falling down, and his admiration of the men who had built this mysterious well, were still quick in his mind. The very taste of the sweet, cool water was on his tongue, and he remembered the small russet-red apples that he used to gather in the garden and eat under the gooseberry bushes, though the taking of fruit was forbidden. A few minutes after the grey-walled garden came into view with a figure bending over the garlic or onion bed—his brother-in-law or a serf?—he was still too far to be sure; nor did he care, for Héloïse was in his mind and too intensely for any other things. No need, he said to himself, to call for help, and he walked into the great kitchen, leaving his horse to wander or to wait for him, not caring which.

At last, she cried; at last! But why these words? he asked. Have I delayed longer by one hour, by one day, by one week, than the time appointed? Are not the words at last those that should be always on the lips of a mistress waiting for her lover? she replied, recovering a bare sufficiency of speech to tell him that she had borne him a boy. I knew that I should bear thee a boy, she said, but we must not awake him, and they stood by the cradle hushed. Abélard dropped on his knees so that he might hear his son's breathing, and after listening a little he took Héloïse in his arms, this second embrace by the cradle telling a man's gratitude to the woman who has borne him a son; and when their embrace relaxed Abélard's arm lay still about Héloïse's shoulders, the gesture telling better than words their appreciation of the mystery of birth. But mysteries are only for a little while, and we are glad to pass back from them to the prattle of daily life, to babies, their health, our own meals, and such like. A good baby, the best of babies, Héloïse said; I believe that there was never so good a child, and would that thou couldst see his eyes, Abélard, for he has

thine own. Our voices have awakened him. The child showed no wish to close his eyes again, but seemed glad at the sight of the world. A step was heard, and his nurse said: he may be feeling hungry, madame, let me give him the breast; and she retired to a corner of the room where she could suckle him at her ease.

I have been happy here with my baby, Héloïse continued, looking forward to this day, to seeing what I have seen, for he seems to recognise thee by instinct; it cannot be doubted at least that he welcomed thee, and I love him better seeing that he loves what I love. Again she fell into her lover's arms, and remained on his shoulder hushed in her happiness. Dear wife, dear wife! he said, overcoming the suffocation of the moment. Thy wife? Thou wilt never be my husband, but always my lover, she answered. Our child yonder has changed the mistress to the wife and the lover to the husband, Abélard replied. Abélard, thou knowest that I cannot be thy wife; not for the sake even of our child can I do that. And Abélard, guessing what was passing in her mind, said: again the vanity of my renown is troubling thee. But it is no vanity, she answered; a child might be born to thee of another woman, and a child might be born of me by another man, and these children might be no better and no worse than the great tide of children that pours over the world day after day. But when thou wast born to the world something more than a child came with thee, a great teacher, a philosopher, the greatest—— Ah, say not those words again, Abélard cried; I am weary of them. To hear me praise thee—— she began, but he interrupted her again: we are in the presence of something greater than my philosophy, whatever that may be worth; in the presence of a human life given to us by God. That thou gavest to me, Abélard. That God permitted me to give, Abélard answered, and that thou didst ask for, saying: partial love satisfies me no longer, I will take the hazard.



Thy words were prompted by the wife in thee, the wife that I have come all this way to claim. Abélard, Abélard, I love to hear those words from thee, for I covet thy love more than all things, more than all except thy renown. Thy promise has been given to me ; thou art to enter the Church, for—— Héloïse, I have a story to tell thee ; come let us sit on these stools and let me tell it, for stories are told better sitting than standing.

And when the story was told, she said : but, Abélard, what reason was there for that covenant ? Abélard told her that Fulbert was beside himself with grief, and he continued for a long time trying to persuade her that Fulbert had done right, and could not have done else, for, as thou hast told me, Héloïse, he fears his brother's spirit and may have had a message from him that marriage must be exacted. But master of words though he was, his words fell dryly on Héloïse's ears, and she may not have heard half of what he spoke. Then thy promise to me to enter the Church counts for nothing ? she asked ; we shall be judged ill in other days and hours ; and I shall take my place among the many women who have brought ruin upon men. But this shall not be, Abélard. Ask all else of me, but ask me not to ruin thee and to make myself a shame during all time. Héloïse, thou wilt not hear, and the woman whom he had always seen meek he now saw raging through the room to and fro, unable for her passion to hear him. Thou wilt not hear ! he cried. And when she stopped before him to tell him in a sudden calm of mind that the philosopher is never the married man, he knew that there was right on her side. Hast forgotten St Paul's words ? she asked, just as he expected she would : art thou free from women ? if not, it is better that a man should marry than that he should burn, and quickly St Jerome's words were hurled at him : fornication is a refuse heap, marriage is barley, chastity wheaten flour. And Cicero ? she said, breaking back to

classical antiquity for proof that Abélard's work would dwindle and end in the materialism of married life. When Cicero was asked to marry Terentia, he refused to do so, saying that he could not give his mind equally to woman and philosophy. Art thou less than Cicero? Remember, Abélard, the words of Seneca, whom we have read together: we must neglect everything for philosophy, life is not long enough, and all interruptions rob us of the fruit. Jesus did not condemn marriage, but he did not take to himself a wife, nor did Buddha. But Mohammed, Abélard replied, seeking to escape from an argument in which he was being worsted, was a married man, I believe. But he was a warrior, not a philosopher, Héloïse answered at once; and they began to talk of the Koran, without either knowing whether it contained a philosophy comparable to the great creed of nothingness taught by Buddha. We are talking, Abélard said at last, of what neither of us knows anything about. If we know little, Héloïse answered, of Buddha, we both know that Socrates was married, and that the sufferings of his married life should cause the most thoughtless to ponder; and to escape from the violent mood which his proposal of marriage had awakened in Héloïse, Abélard asked her if she remembered the storm of abuse with which Xanthippe assailed Socrates from the windows of his house, and the filthy fluid poured upon him from above, and how he had answered, while wiping his head clean: thunder always brings rain. Come, he said, let us look at our child again, who, poor darling, has provoked our first dissension. And they watched a sweet, good-humoured child who, having taken enough milk from the breast, was looking round vaguely interested in the strange world into which he had come. Already, Héloïse said, thoughts are stirring in him. He wants thy ring, Abélard; give it to him. And Abélard gave the ring, saying: a hostage I will claim when we return to Brittany. Shall we ever return hither, she said,

if we leave it? Héloïse, Héloïse! Abélard cried, for he feared that the argument between them was about to begin again.

## CHAP. XXVI.

AND the argument might have begun again had not Denise and her husband come into the room and Abélard gone out with his brother-in-law, leaving Héloïse with his sister, who would have liked to hear of the meeting between the lovers. But Héloïse did not care to share her mind with anybody, and the evening passed away amid family talk of relations and friends, and at nine o'clock they all went out to view a poor stricken cow that had been turned out into the field after calving and was now dying. It was painful to watch her agony and they returned to the stead, Denise and her husband thinking what they might do to relieve the poor animal's sufferings, undecided whether it would not be better to kill her that night; Abélard and Héloïse looking forward to a fresh disputation as soon as they might find themselves alone, each stubborn, each determined to carry his or her point. Side by side they lay divided, Abélard appealing (treacherously, Héloïse thought) to her love of him. But my love, she cried, is powerless to make wrong right; Abélard, thou art mine and I am thine, but thou art part of the world's heritage and thou canst not surrender it. Art thou the guardian of this world? he asked. A cruel answer, she replied, and anon he heard her weeping. She threw her arms about him, and body catching fire from body, voices softened for a while, and having taken their joy of each other, each lay listening to the other's breathing till shallow sleep came, and starting out of an evil dream, she heard his voice in the darkness saying suddenly: thou art afraid lest in time to come thou shouldst be accused of having

sacrificed me. Even so, she replied; is that a fault? He did not answer, for he felt that he had spoken harsh words. As they lay divided their thoughts turned to the cow dying in the byre, and at last they began to talk of the cow, and fell asleep while talking of her.

The news next morning was that the cow might recover after all, and the lovers were invited to the byre to mark the improvement. But the sight of the choking cow was still painful to watch, and leaving the byre Abélard and Héloïse walked to Le Pallet, for Héloïse was minded to go thither with him to see the house he was born in, and follow with him the winding course of the Sangeuse under the bare poplar-trees. It was under these trees that the argument began again: Abélard, thou hast made a covenant with my uncle, but means of escape can be discovered from thy bond. Whereupon Abélard could hold his secret no longer to him, and he told her all that he had heard from Mangold, that his life hung upon his marriage with her. Why didst thou not tell me that thy life was in danger? So to save thy life I have to destroy it, she said. Thy thought is the same as it was overnight? Abélard asked. The same, Héloïse answered, but now enforced by reason, for now I understand that my uncle is but a tool in the hands of the Church. The Church would have thee married lest thou shouldst enter the Church and rise from priest to bishop. Only by keeping thee out of the Church can the Church conquer; and it has conquered, for to save thy mortal life, Abélard, I will wed thee. To-morrow we go to Paris, for the breaking of the covenant would cost me thy life. To break it would be like flinging thy life into the air like a coin. But it is part of the covenant that our marriage is to be kept secret, Abélard rejoined, Héloïse answering him quickly that Fulbert would not keep the secret. For why should he? she asked, and the twain stood looking at each other abashed, Héloïse breaking



the pause, her words: ah, the intrigue is woven skilfully—the Church rids herself of a stumbling-block and Fulbert gets his revenge, rising up in her mind without premeditation as if she were possessed of foreknowledge of the future. Abélard's soul was affrighted, and they walked on in silence through a windy evening, watching great clouds gathering in the dusk, a portentous sunset alarming Abélard, who barely knew whether to yield or to continue to oppose her. Now that he had said that the price of his life was reckoned at marriage he could not draw back, neither could she; and they walked on till it was almost night about them, and they were startled from their reveries by Madelon, whom they overtook a quarter of a league from the valley farm weighed down by the weight of a large basket of live chickens. I will carry these for thee, Abélard said; Madelon resisted, but Abélard took the basket from her, and Héloïse began to tell of their immediate departure, blurting out the whole story, that Abélard stood in danger of his life if he returned to Paris without her. A story in which there is no surprise for me, Madelon answered, and like Héloïse she saw clearly that Fulbert's promise to keep the marriage secret was no more than a blind. Why marry if nobody is to know you're married? was her common-sense, and was Denise's common-sense that night when the story was told after supper. We start in the morning, Héloïse said, and more talk only weakens and embarrasses the mind. But the baby? The baby will be well looked after, Denise answered. Have no fear, Madelon said, for the baby; do the best you can for yourselves, and whenever anybody is going to Paris he will bring a letter to you. Have no fear for the child. But it is hard to part with him, Héloïse answered, and next morning when the horses came to the door she was not to be found. She is after her baby, Madelon said; I was the same when—Héloïse returned with traces of tears in her eyes. Alan

and Denise were accompanying them to Nantes; Abélard rode a little in the rear and when, turning in their saddles, they asked him of what he was thinking, he answered: the wind is blowing from the east, which they understood to mean that the journey to Orléans would be a long one.

Abélard thought they might take the constant wind for a sign, but he did not speak his foreboding as he stood with Héloïse watching their monotonous, almost doubtful progress from bank to bank, steering now on the short, now on the long tack, gaining a little every time, but so little that it seemed that the four days' journey would be prolonged to fourteen. At Tours the wind dropped; the oars had to be got out, but it was hard to make way against the current and, as the skipper foresaw, they had to lie by. At Blois the wind was west by south and it enabled them to reach Orléans, where they were advised not to take the same road through the forest that they had come by, and this advice was accepted willingly, for neither cared to return to Paris along the track of their dead happiness in suppressed and seldom talk. Alan has taught thee to ride, Abélard said at last, that is plain, and he added: we shall not spend so many days riding to Paris as we did in riding from Paris, regretting the words as soon as they were spoken. Unhappiness is reached more quickly than happiness, she answered, and the days they had spent at Saint-Jean-de-Braie, at Étampes, at Chécy, rose up in her mind; and it was difficult for her to keep back her tears, but she kept them back, wearing as cheerful a countenance as she could during the journey, which filled several days, each seeming bitterer than the last, till they drew rein at the Little Bridge, and knew they had come to their parting, Héloïse going to her uncle's house in the rue des Chantres, and Abélard to his lodging. She threw him her horse's reins and turned her head to see him ride away; and that was all till they met next day and were married

in the presence of the witnesses that assembled in the rue des Chantres for the drawing of the covenant. And all was according to the covenant, husband and wife separating after the marriage, Héloïse returning disdainfully, so it seemed to Abélard, who on his way back to his lodging began to understand that Héloïse's instinct for the truth was surer than his. He had already abandoned hope that the marriage would be kept a secret, and as he sat in his room alone he asked himself again and again why he had consented to this marriage; not only consented, he said to himself, but forced the marriage upon her. Assassination would have been better for me than this, but not for her. Unhappy fortune, thrice unhappy fortune, he said, and his thoughts melted away. When he returned to himself it was to remember that their return to Paris would set all the gossips talking and that Fulbert, despite his wish to keep the secret (if he entertained such a wish), would have to confess the marriage to his fellow-canons. And from the Cathedral the tidings would spread rapidly over the city. All this he foresaw, but not that Héloïse would deny the marriage, thereby exciting her uncle's rage against her. If Madelon were here—— he said, as he sat chewing the new story of Fulbert's cruelty. If Madelon were here—— he muttered, as he paced the floor, thinking how Héloïse's escape might be contrived. The door opened. It was she. Abélard guessed her errand, and when he heard her story he took her hand, saying: thou wast right in Brittany, thou art always right, Héloïse. Marriages are broken, she answered, whenever it suits Rome to break them, and the Pope may break ours to retain thee for the Church.

The Pope's care, Abélard answered, is for emperors rather than for philosophers, and the truth of his words appealing to her understanding instantly, she replied: thy father and mother wearied of the world and entered the religious life, breaking thereby the marriage bond.

But thou'rt not minded that we should do likewise? If I escape to the convent of Argenteuil, she said, thou'lt be free to enter the priesthood. If, Abélard cried, thou takest the veil. Yes, Abélard, if I take the veil, she replied, and that I will do, for by taking it I shall give a philosopher to the Church. The Church needs no philosopher, and I cannot sacrifice thee; my life is with thee, O resolute, indomitable Héloïse. But, Pierre, thou wilt not lose me but gain me; and he stood looking into her eyes, her meaning becoming slowly clear to him. The heart of the Prioress is a simple one, he said, and having known love herself she turns a kindly ear to the stories of lovers, but—— But, Héloïse intervened, she need not, indeed she must not, know of our meetings; nor need there be any, thou must not come to Argenteuil before ordination. But, Abélard answered, we must meet and swear that by one common accord we are moved to embrace the religious life. As a priest the convent will be free to thee, she answered, and the abstinences imposed upon us will keep our love from fading. We shall never become common to each other, as might befall us in wedlock. As she spoke she loosed her girdle. This is the last night we shall spend together for many a day, she continued, with a trace of fever in her voice. Be not afraid, Héloïse, he will not dare to come hither with hirelings to put us apart, for God has said: those that God hath joined together let no man put asunder. It will be better, she said, for me to go to Argenteuil without delay. But he cannot claim thee, said Abélard. I shall be safer in the convent than here, she answered. In such talk and restless sleep the night went by, and at dawn they passed without noise from the house and up and hid themselves by the Little Bridge to wait for a cart going to Argenteuil. And they were not long hidden when a rumble caught the ear. If it should be on its way to Argenteuil—— Héloïse said. Then we are indeed fortunate, Abélard replied. A bit of a round



Argenteuil will be, the peasant said, but no matter, I will take you; and moving up the bench from which he drove, he made room for them. When thou'rt a priest thou'lt come to see me? And Abélard answered her: let this be our covenant: that I remain away till I am ordained and that thou'lt wait in the convent for me. I'll wait faithful, she answered, but we shall meet again, for the Prioress will write to the Archbishop of Paris. I will see him this day, he replied; and their talk was continued in abrupt Latin sentences, till at last, as if unable to bear the strain any longer, Abélard said: we are now within a mile or two of Argenteuil. And without more words he jumped from the cart and disappeared round a bend in the lane.

Thy good man be in a hurry to leave thee, and he goeth like a man that hath a heavy load of business on his mind; that I can hear, though I have no Latin. Héloïse answered the peasant: thine eyes tell thee what thine ear heareth not. Faith, lady, he said, your good sense puts you into the way of my mind; and for the rest of the journey he was telling the story of his horse, bought at a fair some two years back for half of his value, the peasant chuckled. The very horse, everyone was saying, for a nobleman's coach; and he would have gone for a big sum of money. But standing behind the horse, I saw that one of his quarters was lower than the other, a thing that mattered not at all in the animal's work, and not much in his appearance, for the droop could only be seen when standing directly behind him, and the horse at ease. Come, says I to the man about to buy him, canst not see? See what? says he. Well, the droop, says I. Lord! thou'rt right, cried he, and he shoves all his money back into his pocket. After that the sale was spoiled; nobody would look at the horse, and in the end, rather than take him home unsold, the owner let me have him for half the price. And a better horse, the peasant chuckled,

was never between the shafts. Always stand behind a horse—me feyther's very words to me. And the peasant continued his giggling chatter about his father, who was a farrier, and the best in the country, without noticing that Héloïse's thoughts were far away among the six years of her childhood spent in the convent which she was waiting to see. At last it came into view, looking like a line of low buildings rather than a single one, grey stone walls and red roofs rising at right angles to one another, with a squat bell tower, the sight of which reminded her of the many offices that its tolling enforced. The bell was always tolling for something or other, and at every moment of the last mile of her journey she expected to hear its clanging tongue. At last it began to toll, and while waiting till Mass was over she remembered how dependent her life was once upon that bell, and how again she would become subject to it for all her life long, till it tolled for her funeral. From day-break till dusk it would toll out her life, its first tolling beginning at six for Urban's prayer, and not long after it would be tolling for Matins, Lauds, Prime, Tierce and Mass. It would toll at the Consecration, and for Sext, for None and for their meal at eleven, and again at noon for Urban's prayer; for Vespers, for our meal, she added, at the fifth hour; for Compline, and for silence at sunset.

## CHAP. XXVII.

I WILL tell the Prioress you are here, but you'll have to wait a little while, for she is busy just now. I shall not mind waiting, Héloïse replied, and following the portress to the parlour door, she said: you know my name, Sister Agatha? Know it, Sister Agatha answered; what can you be thinking of? And you here with us

for five years, my word! For six, Héloïse replied. Six, was it? I'd forgotten. And the sister paused to think the matter out; but remembering suddenly that the Prioress would be wanting to know who the visitor might be, she said: I must run away with the good news. But what an hour you have chosen to come, she cried back, from the end of the corridor, to Héloïse, who was about to re-enter the parlour, a room once of great importance in her life, for when she was summoned from the classroom and told that she was wanted in the parlour, she knew that all the fruits of the season awaited her; besides fruit, Madelon's basket often contained a cheese, and it helped her to forget the convent fare, somewhiles trite and commonplace. She was glad, moreover, to see Madelon, to hear of the rue des Chantres and her uncle, who, alas, never came to see her. It would have been, in those days, a little triumph for her had he come to Argenteuil, for the pupils were judged by the rank and wealth of their parents and friends who came to see them. Madelon sometimes forgot to put on her best gown, and Héloïse remembered how one day, while walking with Madelon in the orchard, a pupil had caught sight of them, and asked her afterwards with whom she was walking. She had yielded to the temptation to lie to her fellow-pupil: with my aunt, she had said, for to lie seemed better than to confess that her visitor was her uncle's servant. She had dared it, for the pupil was many yards away, too far to notice Madelon's stained and worn gown. The memory of this lie often threw a doubt on her own essential character, as she hoped it was and believed it to be; and now this bygone lie pierced her more sharply than it had ever done before. A mean spirit once dwelt within me, she said; it is in me still, though subdued, perhaps conquered. As she stood waiting for the Prioress she bethought herself of the cake that Madelon had brought her, of its great brown

crust as much as the exquisite crumb, and how she had shared it with the pupil in the convent parlour. On the table before me, she said, we opened the hamper; and then to escape from an unpleasant memory she looked round the room, saying: nothing is changed. The table and six chairs are all in their places, that one still unmended, broken, not by Madelon, though she was charged with the breaking, put away in a distant corner for safety; and the books, too, piled one upon the other, just as I last saw them. The floor was polished last Tuesday, she added, drawing her feet along the shining surface, the beeswax giving forth a faint odour. I could tell the room by the smell, though I were blindfolded. The last time she was in the parlour she was summoned from the illuminating-room: a lay sister came to fetch her: Héloïse is wanted in the parlour, and she had run thither thinking of cake; and the sting of her disappointment on not seeing a basket on the table was still in her mind, and the sound of Madelon's voice saying: I have come to fetch thee back to Paris, so make thy bundle quickly or we shall be late for supper. To fetch me to Paris for always or for a few days? she asked, and Madelon answered: that is just as his humour may fall out. Two years ago, about this very time of year, Héloïse said; almost the same hour of the day. Two years have passed, and in those two years is the stuff of my life: Abélard, Astrolabe and marriage. Yet in spite of all my fate is to return to Argenteuil. In a few days I shall wear the habit. How extraordinary! It requires courage, she said; but I feel that I shall not lack courage if I keep my thoughts fixed on the end; and if the waiting outruns two or three years Astrolabe may be sent for. For why not? she asked, and her thoughts returning to the years gone by, she remembered Clothilde, who, being the Prioress's daughter, was never beaten, the exemption seeming reasonable to all, for Clothilde's



mind did not retain much of what was put into it, so what use to beat a child for being as God made her?

One day, in answer to a question: why has the Prioress got a daughter? I thought nuns never had children, she was told that the Prioress was a widow and entered the religious life in consequence of her husband's death, Comte Godfrey de Chatillon, who went to the Crusades and was buried in a place well known to the Prioress; for during the first year of her widowhood her husband's ghost often came to beg her to enter a convent and dedicate the rest of her life to praying for the release of his soul from purgatory. Such was the story the pupils whispered among themselves, and if a pupil turned to a nun to ask if it were true that Godfrey appeared before the Prioress to beg that as soon as his soul was called into heaven his body should be sought on the field of battle and buried in Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre alongside that of Godfrey de Bouillon, the pupil was told that the Prioress entered the religious life with the intention of devoting herself to the liberation of her husband's soul. And for that very reason she was elected Prioress. But there was another reason; Héloïse often heard it mentioned with lowered breath that the management of the convent would be safer in the hands of a widow than in those of a spinster, which was true in a way, but she was not altogether certain that the nuns did not feel that a noble name would add to the fame of the convent.

It was the custom of the convent for the pupils to visit the Prioress in her room occasionally, and Héloïse dwelt on the emotion she experienced one day on being bidden thither, the dread she felt while mounting the stairs almost forbidding her to lift the latch of the door. Her knock was still clear in her memory, and the answer to it, and the great fat woman sitting in her chair writing at a table covered with papers. The

Prioress's veil was thrown aside, and Héloïse caught sight of a large bald patch and a few straggling grey hairs before the Prioress had had time to readjust her veil. The moment fixed itself upon her mind, and she had often recalled it, thinking of the Prioress as exceptionally of her race and country. For although a large woman of commanding presence, her face was small, rather short than long, with round, intelligent eyes, and her nose when she was a young woman must have been of great beauty, for it was beautiful in her decline, lying low upon the face, well shapen, with clear-cut nostrils. Héloïse remembered her mouth, large but well-shapen, and the chin's deflection, giving to her face in conjunction with her eyes an expression of great kindness. She had read in it pity and compassion, if not a liking an amiable toleration for human weaknesses; and a proneness to discover reasons why they should be overlooked, condoned and forgiven in others. When one of her nuns came and opened her heart to her she imposed no heavy penance, Héloïse was sure of that; and the story of Sister Paula's baby was rising up in Héloïse's mind, with a suspicion of the Prioress's sympathy, when the Prioress herself opened the door and came forward with so ardent a face, and one so eloquent with welcome, that Héloïse was ashamed of herself for having indulged in a momentary condemnation, if her charity could be rightly called a condemnation.

The Prioress had aged in the last two years; she was now an old woman with her middle age behind her; her gait was feebler, she tottered, but Héloïse could read some of the ancient grace in her hands when she sat talking, her hands laid on her clumsy knees, long, delicately shaped hands, that told of an ancestry free from kitchen work. There was charm in the Prioress's low and affectionate voice when she began to talk of Héloïse's father, Philippe, who was killed in Palestine. The lay sisters were waiting for their orders in the passage, and at last they took heart

and rapped. But they were bidden to wait, and were clean forgotten—put out of her mind by memories of Peter the Hermit, who was from her own country. My father, as you know, Héloïse, was the Comte Guy de Puiset, and Abdère was the village in which Peter was born, not many miles from the castle where I was born, six miles from Amiens. He often came up to the castle, and touched by his piety and desire to see the Holy Sepulchre, which seemed to absorb the whole of his life, we gave him money for the journey (not all the money but the greater part of it), and I remember his thanks to us on the castle steps before he went away.

A year or eighteen months passed before we began to think of him again, and the news we got was that on arriving at Jerusalem he was shocked by the indignity with which the pilgrims were treated and the cruelty often put upon them, so much so that he was heartened to undertake a journey to Rome, where he caught the ear quickly of the good Pope Urban II., who promised him his aid in the persuasion of Europe to unite and go forth and win back our Lord's Sepulchre from the Saracen. You know the story, but it is pleasant to go over it again. After persuading the Pope to come to his aid, Peter crossed the Alps and preached from town to town, towns and villages emptying before him. He was of small stature, a dark, pleasant face, with long white hair, and rode upon a mule from whose tail his followers plucked hairs to keep as cherished relics. The Prioress's voice became graver when she began to tell how the mule kicked out and broke a man's ribs; but Peter, turning round in his saddle, raised his hands and invoked the power of the Lord, whereupon the man was made whole again, and, falling on his knees, he gave thanks. Nor was it long after, she said, that Urban II. came to France to hold a great Council, and when the Council was over and Urban preached to the multitude, passing from the Latin

language to the French, a thing he was able to do, for he had not forgotten the language of his youth, a great shout went up: *Deus vult*. The Pope appealed to the knights standing by, asking how it was that they were busy in these fateful times shearing their brethren like sheep, and quarrelling one with the other. Fallen knights, he said, descendants of unconquered sires, remember the vigour of your forefathers and do not degenerate from your noble stock. As the voice of the Pope died away, there went up from the multitude once more: *Deus vult! Deus vult!* And with eyes raised to heaven Urban stretched out his hands for silence and began to speak, this time in terms of praise. Still forgetful of the lay sisters, the Prioress commenced her relation of the crusade. Héloïse had heard part of it, at least, for the nuns never wearied of telling it, but she had not heard it before from the lips of the widow of Godfrey de Chatillon; and in listening to the old nun she forgot her physical infirmities, her age, her bulk, and listened with reverence to the tale of the sufferings of the knights as they strove through Hungary—how the Huns, having been but lately converted to Christianity, did not welcome the Crusaders and the army; and that when the Crusaders saw the arms of their vanguard hanging in derision from the walls, they poured a thick flight of arrows into the city. The story she told was captivating, but it began to seem to Héloïse as if the Prioress would never come to the end of it, and she would have liked to remind the Prioress of the lay sisters waiting in the corridor, but she dared not; and so it befell her to hear that the Crusaders seized a deserted fortress called Exerogorgo, soon to be besieged by the Sultan of Rhum, and there being no drinking water they drank the blood of the horses to assuage their thirst; and the next thing Héloïse heard was of the capture of the sacred city by means of a wooden tower on wheels pushed alongside the wall,



invented by Godfrey of Lorraine, and having thereby won part of the wall, a breach was made through which the Christian army poured, destroying the Saracens, killing men, women, and children, relinquishing their destruction only when they were moved to go to pray at the Holy Sepulchre; and their prayers done, they rose up again and continued to extirpate the enemies of our Lord.

But thou'st heard me tell all this story before, Héloïse, and hast not forgotten any of it, maybe. But I have forgotten the nuns waiting in the corridor for orders, and have not welcomed thee as I should have done, allowing myself to be drawn into the old story before asking by what heavenly design thou'st been led back to us, though it be but for a visit. For more than a visit, dear Mother, Héloïse answered; for I have come to enter the religious life, the life of the world not seeming to us enough. The hand of God I see in this, the Prioress answered, and rising from her chair she took Héloïse in her arms. Let us kneel down together, she said, and thank God at once for his great goodness. He is good indeed, so good that we cannot measure his goodness. After having said a prayer the two women rose to their feet, and the Prioress said: we have praised God, and now, Héloïse, thou deservest a word of praise; for we work together with God. Grace is given to us—— But you must hear my story before you praise me, Héloïse said. I am sure, the Prioress answered, there is nothing in Héloïse's story of herself that will withdraw my love from her. I am sure that you will listen kindly, dear Mother, as kindly as Jesus did to the woman of Samaria. The Prioress bowed her head at the sacred name, and at that moment the door opened and Sister Cecilia came into the room, stopping abruptly in the middle of the floor to apologise for her intrusion. So overjoyed was I, dear Mother, at the news that Héloïse had come to see us, that

I forgot that you and she would have much to talk about privily, and she turned to go, but Héloïse cried: don't go, Cecilia; don't go. Forgive me, dear Mother, Héloïse said, turning to the Prioress, but I have been so long out of the convent that I forgot to ask if Cecilia might not remain to hear my story; and waiting for the Prioress to answer, Héloïse sat gazing at a tall nun, whose long and round upper lip had always reminded her of a goat, a practical, managing woman, whose talent in the illuminating-room was a source of profit and renown to the convent. Am I to go or stay? Cecilia asked, and the Prioress answered that if Cecilia wished to stay and hear Héloïse's story she might stay. But thou'st not heard, Héloïse, that my dear Clothilde, whom thou knewest in the novitiate, has departed from us and is now with God. We say so almost with certainty, for there are some souls that pass to heaven without delay in purgatory, sinless souls, and Clothilde was surely one of these. We must believe that some go straight to heaven. Peter the Hermit—— Forgive me, Mother, Sister Cecilia interrupted, I forgot to tell you that the lay sisters, Apollonia and Marcella, are waiting to see you. I will see them presently, the Prioress answered; but we have first to hear the story Héloïse has come to tell us.

And the nuns listened unabashed to Héloïse's relation of her life with her uncle in the rue des Chantres, her meeting with Abélard, her flight to Brittany, and the birth of her baby. And to think that living within six miles of Paris we should not have heard of this before! cried Sister Cecilia. We have put the world behind us, Sister, the Prioress answered, for she had begun to think that the story they were listening to would prove a loosening in the convent discipline, already too lax. But she could not summon enough courage to dismiss Cecilia now, and with a heart full of misgivings and fears she gave ear to Héloïse, who told a moving story of how Abélard and

herself were resolved to enter the religious life (it being in their case a necessity), thereby breaking the marriage yoke, which she admitted was not accepted by them with Christian humility, but as a sort of penance for the original sin. We should not be happy if we were to lose our souls in the end, she said. For of what does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul? the Prioress murmured, and then, raising her eyes subdued in awe, she asked if there had been a manifestation. I mean, did an angel warn you that your marriage was a mistake and distasteful to God? We both began to feel that we could not continue in married life, Héloïse answered. And to whom was it first revealed that the religious life was the only way out of your difficulty? the Prioress asked. To me, I think, Héloïse replied; but Abélard knew that I spoke his truth as well as my own.

A beautiful story, said the Prioress, and then, speaking like one in a dream, she continued: it may be that I'm speaking heresy if I say that God in his divine goodness may use sin as a means of bringing the souls he most needs nearer to himself. I am afraid I am, for does not the Church teach that sin is employed only by the Evil One to capture the souls he covets for the hell in which God has placed him? And though an angel be the messenger we are not sure he comes from God, for angels come from under as well as from above the earth. As no angel appeared to thee it must be that the order came from God. And Abélard being of the same mind I should have said I hold it to be certain that the hand of God is in it as much as it was in the inspiration that took Peter the Hermit to the Holy Land, for wife and husband have never before been called apart from one another in a few days. A few weeks, dear Mother, Héloïse corrected; and the talk wore on, Héloïse telling as much of the story as she dared, repeating that Abélard and herself had agreed to part, though loving each other dearly. He

to the priesthood and I to the cloister, she said, hoping that she had chosen words that would remove all doubt from the Prioress. But the nun did not answer, and Héloïse began to doubt that her story found acceptance; a mistake, however, this was, for the Prioress's silence did not proceed from her doubts, for how could the story she had heard be thought of but as a rare and beautiful incident of the grace of God descending upon two human beings, taking them out of the danger of earthly life, and at the same time setting their feet on the way to the true life that lies beyond the grave? So did the old nun feel and think, and when she awoke from her dream of God and his providence, she said that the convent would be glad that Héloïse should remain with them if it were her husband's wish. My husband, Héloïse said, will come here to-morrow, and we shall make the declaration which will free us from the marriage bond. It was at that moment that she began to understand that her end could not be reached except through a maze of lies, and forthright she accepted lies as part of her life's business, saying to herself that it was hurtful to lie, and of all, to the Prioress, but to waver in the pursuit of that thing which seemed to her the only thing worth striving for was unworthy.

A treacherous scruple could not enter a mind already aware that in marrying Abélard she had discovered not only a great passion but a career and an ambition, and she was filled with contempt for herself for the faint hesitation with which she had lied to the Prioress; and vowing to be more resolute in future, she spoke with enthusiasm of the life in the convent, of the new nuns that had joined, adding anxious enquiries for pupils with the view to deceiving the nuns. Thy return to us is indeed a gift of God, said the Prioress. But here comes an old friend of thine, Sister Tetta, and Héloïse rose to greet a small nun, small and withered



like an autumn leaf seemingly ready to detach itself from its stem, to flutter down into the earth. But though very little was left of the original woman, Sister Tetta still retained her funny running little gait and her pleasant, almost joyful, voice. Why, it is Héloïse, she cried, come back to us at last, at last. We have all been wondering if you had forgotten us; it must be more than two years, nearly three, since we have seen you.

Héloïse has been married, the Prioress said, and has left husband and baby to join us; and Abélard, the great philosopher, her husband, was moved by the grace of God to forget the vanities of this life, else she could not have come hither. And is not this story which Héloïse has just related to me and Sister Cecilia an extraordinary manifestation of God's goodness and his unending providence? Two or three years, Sister Tetta answered, of the life of the world is enough for those in whom God has implanted the instinct of heaven, and I think I always felt that one day Héloïse would be returned to us. But how long has Héloïse been away from us? Sister Cecilia asked, and the three nuns were agreed that it must be about three years since Madelon had come from Argenteuil with a letter from Canon Fulbert saying that Héloïse was to return home. But at what season did Madelon come with this letter? Sister Cecilia asked, and the Prioress and Sister Tetta were not agreed, the Prioress holding that it was in October, Sister Tetta holding by August as the date of Héloïse's departure. But why this dispute about the date, since we may find it, for you all remember the first page of the missal that is going to-morrow to the Bishop of Lichfield. It will be a great adornment to his cathedral, Cecilia continued, for it is the best work we have done. You cannot, Mother Prioress, have forgotten that we stood by this very table wondering at the beauty of the page? Sister Cecilia opened the missal, and pointing to the two

knights fighting, she said: you cannot have forgotten this, Héloïse? Here are the two knights, one on the ground bleeding, the other leaning on his sword, and the cat scrambling through the tendrils and leaves of the bower carrying away the privy member that the knight has just lopped from his rival's body. Thou canst not have forgotten, Héloïse, for these leaves are thine and nearly as firm in line as anything in the missal. We shall be glad of thy handicraft again if thou hast not lost it, which cannot be in so short a time. Does not the cat recall to thee the old brindled fellow, Satan, that used to watch us, sitting on the table beside us as we worked, a little bored, sometimes taking the pencil from our fingers?

Héloïse looked into the missal, and the nuns talked on a little, forgetful of Héloïse, who was too tired to listen to them. Her eyes closed from time to time and she opened them quickly, not unmindful of the politeness she owed to the nuns, and every time she did so she heard the same argument—that another Peter the Hermit must be sought and found who would rouse Europe again to go forth to repel the Saracen. But we are forgetting our visitor, the Prioress cried. My dear Héloïse, thou'rt falling asleep and weak with hunger. Héloïse protested. But obedience to the Superior is the first rule, the Prioress said; thou'rt too tired to eat, but a glass of milk shall be sent to thee and some food, a slice of bread and butter and a fruit or two; and I, too, will disappear, but to return again later in the afternoon.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

HER sleep deepened hour after hour, and when the opening of the door awoke her she could remember nothing, and sat staring at her visitor, a pleasant, open-faced woman, thirty or thirty-five, of medium height and

good figure. I hope that I have not disturbed you, she said, and Héloïse answered : no, for I was near to the end of my sleep. How long have I been asleep ? It doesn't matter in the least, the sister answered ; return to sleep if you are so disposed. No, do not go, Héloïse cried, unwilling to part with the nun's pretty forehead, curved eyes, and the face coming to a point, her long, shapely hands and winning smile, a smile so intimate that Héloïse already felt a longing for the nun's friendship beginning in her. My name, she said, is Hildegarde, I am the novice mistress, but Hilda is the name my friends know me by, and I hope you'll soon be one of them. Héloïse answered that she felt she was already one of them. But you were not here when I was a child, getting my education from the nuns ? she asked. I was not, the nun answered ; I have been here only two years. You must have come soon after I left to go to live with my uncle in Paris, said Héloïse, and Mother Hilda answered her that it is always coming and going from the convent to the world, and from the world to the convent. You've just been married, yet I hear that you and your husband have decided to enter the religious life. God's grace comes suddenly and inexplicably, Héloïse said, sorry to look into the nun's beautiful face with a lie upon her lips. And to escape from further lies she began to tell of the Prioress's willingness to chatter of Peter the Hermit. She never wearies of that story, said Mother Hilda ; nor is there any reason why she should. The husband she loved truly was killed fighting for the possession of the Holy Sepulchre, and his spirit appears to her. Her husband's ghost was a good reason for her to come hither, Héloïse replied ; she could not leave the poor soul lamenting in purgatory. Did many of the nuns in this convent lose their husbands in the Holy Land ? she asked. I lost mine, Mother Hilda answered ; and she told that she had been compelled from the world into the convent for the

same reason, or very nearly the same reason, as the Prioress. My husband was killed in the Holy Land fighting for the Holy Sepulchre, and I came hither to think of him more securely than I could do in the world, afraid, she said, that in the world temptation might find me out, and the poor dead require all our thoughts, for they live in us and are only really dead when we cease to think of them. Do you think the beloved dead die when we die? Héloïse asked. If no one is left to think of them, Mother Hilda replied, they die; and that is why it seems to me that men will sacrifice all things for glory, for by the achievement of great deeds they beget memory that will keep them alive for centuries. So you think, Mother Hilda, that the Crusaders go to the Holy Land to rescue the Holy Sepulchre to save their own lives? In a measure, yes, the nun answered; Jesus lives for us as long as we think of him, and the more we think of him the more intensely he lives. But, Mother Hilda, Jesus is God. Jesus is God, of course, Mother Hilda replied. I was thinking of how he lives in us, not how he lives in heaven. Men do not know, she said, pursuing her thoughts as if she had forgotten Héloïse, why they sacrifice themselves in battle, retire into caves, fast and pray; why they write books or build churches. They act in obedience to an instinct. Only the shallows of our lives are agitated by reason, instinct controls the depths, and our highest instinct is of our immortality. It begins here on earth—— You do not think then, Héloïse interrupted, that we drink our immortality from the same cup? From the same cup, perhaps, Mother Hilda answered, but not the same draught. At that moment a tall, slim nun entered, and Héloïse's heart sank, for Sister Angela closed the door and came over to join in the conversation, seemingly the least likely person in the world to understand or appreciate spiritual confidences; such was Héloïse's reading of Sister Angela's round, almost foolish eyes, her dragging mouth and



drooping chin. In her face was the simplicity of the deer, and not even the nun's habit could hide the gracefulness of her long arms and slender hands. Héloïse expected a stupid woman to reveal herself, but an intelligence began to appear—a fitful, disconnected intelligence that broke into the conversation and then left it as abruptly, putting thoughts into Héloïse's mind of animals she had seen at one moment eager to claim human companionship and then, wearying suddenly of it, returning into themselves without apparent reason. .

Mother Hilda turned to the second Crusade, which was being talked about, and after listening with a look of contempt on her face, Sister Angela said: it is not by hacking the Saracens with battle-axes and stabbing them with halberts that we shall win the Sepulchre, but by prayers for their conversion. But do you think, Héloïse asked, that if all the monasteries were to offer up prayers together for the conversion of the Caliph, he would relinquish the errors he was born into? If we were to devote our lives to praying for the Caliph, he would not be able to help himself, said Sister Angela; but our prayers are thwarted by the prayers of monks asking for more battle-axes, and the Sepulchre though won from the Saracens may fall into the Infidels' hands again, for the Saracen warriors are not the barbarians they are represented to be, but poets—troubadours indeed. And the talk of the nuns turning from troubadours to the great men of the past, to Socrates and Plato, Sister Angela then held that men who lived virtuous lives were sure of heaven, not perhaps as sure as any Christian, but still sure. It seemed to Héloïse that Mother Hilda listened approvingly when Sister Angela began to advocate one of Abélard's doctrines, that heaven was not closed to the great Pagans. But this belief was called into question by a new-comer. Whereupon Sister Angela rose to her feet, saying: now I must be going, and left the room abruptly. I hope I said

nothing to offend her, said the nun who had dared to impugn Angela's orthodoxy. Mother Hilda answered that Angela was always sudden and unexpected. We always say that one side of Angela knows nothing of the other side, and in support of this appreciation Héloïse heard that Sister Angela had been engaged for some years on a great work. But if we ask her, said Mother Hilda, what the great work is about she cannot tell us, for as I have said one side of Angela is a stranger to the other.

The door opened. It was the Prioress come to ask Héloïse if she would like to take the air on the greensward. I thought that if thou wert not tired—— I am quite rested, Héloïse replied. And thou must come with us, Mother Hilda, said the Prioress, and addressing Héloïse she added : our novice mistress. Mother Hilda pleaded that she had been away from the novitiate too long, and hoping that the Prioress would excuse her she left them. A most successful novice mistress, the Prioress said, and thou'lt like her as much as the others do. For to-morrow I shall be in the novitiate, Héloïse replied, and she sat silent, afraid that her voice had betrayed her. In three or four months we'll give thee the white veil ; and the habit is a great help. The Prioress continued talking, and Héloïse sat rapt in thoughts of Abélard's ordination, and was glad when the sun-litten windows interrupted the prosy Prioress, reminding her that summer was not yet over. A beautiful summer, she said ; I have yet in mind the fine days breaking slowly after a wet spring, for in March it seemed as if God wished to punish us ; such stupid thoughts often come to me, so thoughtless am I of all that God does for us. We all forget him but he never forgets us, as this evening testifies. I have known beautiful Junes and Julys and beautiful Augusts, too, but never a September like this one. Look up, Héloïse, didst ever see such clouds ? And Héloïse was uncertain what colour to put upon the

clouds, for they were neither red nor yellow; a red-yellow, she said, making the blue between bluer than any flower. We must not compare the abode of God with the abode of man, the Prioress replied. I started in the dusk, said Héloïse; when not a leaf was stirring. And not a leaf is stirring now, the Prioress answered; a beautiful day has gone by. I am glad, she continued, that thou hast come to us on an evening like this one. In the world we forget quickly, but we remember our childhood, and I am glad to think that thy childhood was passed with us. Mother, I remember everything. Well then, come and see the things that thou dost not remember—our little improvements. Here we are in the orchard, where thou hast walked many times. The gravel of this broad path is familiar under my feet, Héloïse answered, and the smell of the orchard brings the years back to me. But what an abundance of fruit you have; the trees are loaded. They are indeed, Héloïse. But the waste of the fruit breaks my heart, for we cannot eat it all nor sell as much of it as we wish; we store the apples along numberless shelves. I know them, Héloïse answered. We have put up many more during thine absence, dear child, and in this way we keep our apples sound till Christmas; but after Christmas decay begins. If we walk a little farther thou'lt see a low wall built along the river's bank, and this wall is one of our improvements. It gives us greater privacy, and it is not too high to shut out the view of the river and the towing-path on the other side. From the windows of the illuminating-room thou'lt see the barges sailing, coming up from Normandy laden with food returning in ballast, a beautiful sight. Mother, I have never seen anything more beautiful than that great plain along which the mists are now rising. The silence seems to unite earth with heaven, and the moon rising up behind yonder poplar puts me in mind of a tall altar candle. Lighted for thee, the Prioress

answered. But, Mother, God would not take notice of anything so small as I am. My dear child, God knows all things, and is everywhere, in all things, behind things, and in front of things; all is permeated with God. The smallest life, as well as what seems to us the greatest, are all the same in his eyes. I say this in truth, for his hand must be everywhere or nowhere.

## CHAP. XXIX.

A LITTLE whirling wind blew up from the river; a presage, it seemed to the Prioress to be, of winter, mayhap of a bronchial cold, and she drew her feet more quickly through the loose gravel and sand, to Héloïse's admiration, for she did not think the old woman could walk so fast, throwing the pebbles from side to side. She was, moreover, weary of the Prioress's pious talk, and thinking that she could not endure it another five minutes, she confessed to a great longing for bed, for you see, Mother, I was out of bed at daybreak. Thou shalt be in it within the next few minutes, the Prioress answered, and Héloïse was scarcely at length before she was asleep. I must have dozed at once, she said, when the Mass bell awoke her.

Her breakfast was brought to her in the parlour; and after Mother Hilda, her first visitor, many old friends came to see her. Sister Paula was amongst them, and her fresh, girlish face—she had changed but little, if at all—drew Héloïse's eyes to her; and, her thoughts crossing ever back and forth between Brittany and Argenteuil, she bethought herself of a little outing, she and Paula going to visit the woman who was looking after Paula's baby, she had forgotten the child's name. But to arrange for this excursion she must have some private talk with Paula, and while she was thinking how this might be



managed, Sister Cecilia asked Héloïse to come to the illuminating-room and sit there with her. Sister Josiane proposed the library, and Héloïse answered: for a whole year in Brittany I have not seen a book. In Brittany? cried several voices. Yes, Héloïse replied; I went to Brittany to have my baby; but as soon as I have cast a look over the shelves and returned from a little walk in the orchard and kitchen garden, you may expect me. But do not forget, Sister Cecilia, that I have not put my hand to painting since I left here, and you can entrust me only with the simplest work. I am glad, answered Sister Cecilia, that you have not forgotten the convent. So well do I remember it that I am going to become one of you, Sister Héloïse replied. A miracle our Prioress declares it to be, and a miracle it must be, for none of us thought to see you again. But why a miracle, Sister Cecilia? asked Héloïse. That grace should have come to you both, and at the same time, and you only a month wedded, is indeed miraculous, the nun answered; and Héloïse shrank from Sister Cecilia's examination of her motives in returning to the convent, and changed the matter of their talk by a mention of the beauty of yester evening by the river. We must get rid of our pigs, Sister Cecilia said, or keep them in sties. You will not forget, said Sister Tetta, to walk down to the river and see the wall we have built there, for you'll find a long, low wooden seat that has been put up since you were here; we sit there in our evening recreation and look out on the world. I have already admired the wall in the Prioress's company, but I will admire it in yours, Tetta. But first I must look up and down the bookshelves. In this you have not changed much, Héloïse, for a book was always the best thing in the world for you, and having opened the library door for her, Sister Tetta said: you will stay here just as long as you please, dear Héloïse. It is your last day of liberty; if

Abélard comes to-day and you sign the declaration, you will re-enter the novitiate to-morrow.

In the novitiate to-morrow, she repeated to herself, climbing the steep way to Abélard's fame, my happy lot. On these words her eyes turned from the shelves, and when they went back to the shelves she began to ask herself of what she had been thinking. Virgil's name distracted her thoughts from herself, and she recalled the window in the rue des Chantres overlooking the river, the town springing up on the right bank, the fields between the houses in which the white steers laboured and the ploughman bent over the stilts, a landscape nearer her heart than the landscape before her, for it was at a window overlooking the Lombard quarter that she had read Virgil, Tibullus, Horace, Cornelius Nepos, Sallust, Seneca. It was in the rue des Chantres that she had spoken to Abélard of the *Academics*, Cicero's book putting a thought of another book in Abélard's head, *Sic et non*, in which he would show the Fathers contradicting each other just like the philosophers. Boëthius! A high official whose book on the consolations of philosophy was written whilst waiting for execution; and whilst waiting for Abélard she might have to rely on the consolations of philosophy. Her curiosity was caught next by the *Thebaid* of Statius, a writer of whom she had never heard, and taking down his book she began to turn over the pages, reading here and there till her attention was fixed by the story of the blaspheming Capaneus, who threatened to storm Thebes in spite of Jupiter's lightning and was struck down by a thunderbolt. And then she came upon some works by Aristotle—the *Categories*—which she returned to their place on the shelf for a future occasion. She passed over a translation of Plato's *Timæus*, and on taking down its neighbour, the translation of Dionysius, the Areopagite, on the heavenly hierarchy, by John Scotus Erigena, she remembered having heard Abélard say that the Pope

was not sure that this work ought to be translated, but did not condemn it, for Dionysius was a saint, the patron saint of France, and one that could not be easily condemned. She continued to think of him while opening and shutting books filled with stories of Troy and Alexander, and these seemed to contain many things not in Virgil or the historians. One of these days when I have a bad cold in the head—— she said, and turning to the next shelf, she found it filled with works of Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and his disciple Orosius, who, she had heard Abélard say, set himself to prove that the whole history of the kingdoms and republics of the world was a calamitous history. After reading a few pages she closed it, saying: a dismal book, but needed at the time to reply to the heathen, who declared their misfortunes were due to Christianity. It was not, however, a book with which to break her long fast from literature, and she sought along the shelves for something more tasty. For beauty I shall have to go to the ancients, she said, and Ovid's *Art of Love* seemed to her suitable to her circumstance; for it will remind me of the love that I put aside, and which I may forget in this convent if his ordination be retarded unduly. But one doesn't forget, she added; and she read on and on, as much for the sake of the subject as for the elegant Latin in which the poet conveys his teaching. The Latin was often so apt that it set her thinking (she had not read Latin for more than a year) that Virgil was not a greater poet than Ovid, and to set her mind at rest she sought for the *Metamorphoses*, and finding it fell to admiring the strenuous narrative flowing on without break. A wonderful imagination, she said, but not so near to the heart of poetry as Virgil, whereupon the *Metamorphoses* was laid aside, and after reading the *Georgics* a little while she breathed a happy sigh and sat quite still, rapt in meditation, saying: he loved life as life has ever been,

as it will always be, bringing the earth in its holiness before us, the fields and all the shows of the seasons. She picked up the book and sat reading, laying it aside from time to time so that she might enjoy her old admirations, and returning to her book after a long dream she read on, forgetful of her promise to visit Cecilia in the illuminating-room.

You must eat and not read so much, the lay sister said, for Héloïse did not put aside her book and apply herself to the platters but read while she ate, the meal seeming a tiresome interruption to her. She was still reading when the Prioress came into the room an hour later abruptly and a little fussed, saying that Abélard had arrived with Hubert, the Archbishop's chaplain, who has come, she said, to find out from thee if it be thy wish to enter the religious life (as if thou wouldst have come hither and asked to be admitted if it were not thy wish). Am I to go to him now? Héloïse asked, and the Prioress answered: yes; and when his scruples are satisfied we will join you, myself and the Mothers and Stephen, our chaplain. Héloïse rose and walked down the passage, stopping a moment to consider how she could answer the questions that would be put to her, and the Prioress, who was watching, said: she is not certain of herself; I'll run and offer up a prayer in the chapel. And while the Prioress prayed Héloïse passed into the parlour, to meet there a small, thin, bony, olive-coloured man, with bright, intelligent eyes and an alert voice. His eyes are full of enquiry, was her comment, and I must be upon my guard; and checking the impulse to talk, she listened to him without sign of interest or appreciation on her face while he told her that Abélard had called yesterday on the Archbishop to tell him that he wished to enter the religious life. Héloïse's coldness checked the priest in his amiable mood, but as she did not speak he was obliged to continue talking, telling her that years ago the ecclesiastics of



Notre-Dame hoped that Abélard would enter the religious life; but last winter the rumour ran through the city that Abélard intended to go to Brittany in the spring to fetch you back and make you his wife. So Fulbert was already preparing the announcement of the wedding even before it took place, Héloïse said to herself, and she crossed her hands and looked demure, for she was determined to reveal little of herself to the Archbishop's chaplain. Hubert waited for her to speak, but she kept herself from speaking till the silence became so irritating that he found himself again obliged to break the pause. It was a surprise to his Grace to hear that you had decided to enter the religious life. Again the priest waited for Héloïse to speak, and this time feeling that she must say something, she said: his Grace's surprise was most natural; and so that she might not seem wilfully reserved, she added: we were surprised ourselves. You left your uncle's house last spring and have been in Brittany ever since? said the priest. Living at Le Pallet, Héloïse answered. Your baby was born in Brittany and you have left him? the priest rejoined, and Héloïse replied: my baby is but four months old; we could not bring him with us. A long journey for an infant, Hubert said. A long journey for anybody, Héloïse replied, and feeling that the moment had come for her to be garrulous, she began to speak of the dangers of the forest, it being infested with robbers; and the journey by ship from Orléans to Nantes is a long and tedious journey, she said, if the wind be not blowing from the east. The priest shuddered and Héloïse smiled faintly, saying that the east wind is welcomed by those who are going to Nantes, cursed by those voyaging from Nantes to Orléans. She spoke of shallows and sandbanks to gain time, saying to herself: Abélard and the Prioress are waiting and his Grace's chaplain knows it, and the more I tell him of the journey the fewer questions he will be able

to put to me. She began a relation of the inns of Meung and Beaugency, and the grand flight of hawks they had witnessed from their ship, till the priest was forced to intervene, saying that although all she was telling him was of great interest (for himself contemplated a journey to Brittany), he must remind her that several people were waiting to witness the signing of the deed, and that what he had come to enquire out was when her vocation for the religious life was revealed to her. None can explain God's grace, Héloïse answered, but whosoever receives it cannot be in doubt that he or she has been led by the hand. There is then no doubt in your mind that your renunciation of your married life is a manifestation of God's grace? Can it be else? Héloïse answered; the devil would not lead me hither, it would be to his purpose to leave me in the world, where I might succumb to temptation. A house that is divided against itself, Father—— You cannot tell me why God chose you, the priest intervened, Héloïse thought rather testily; but you can tell me when all doubt was removed from your mind. It seems to me, she replied, that I was always conscious of sin, but sin was so delightful in the beginning that I could not withhold myself; but as I continued to sin I became more and more conscious that—— Héloïse hesitated, and the priest said: conscious that you were losing your soul, that the devil's hand was extended to grip you. I don't know that I thought about the devil, Héloïse answered. But, said the priest, we are conscious of sin because we believe in hell. But should we not be conscious of sin, Héloïse replied, even though hell and purgatory were not? And then, feeling that she was on very delicate ground, she said: atonement, Father. We atone by confessing our sins to a priest and performing the penances imposed upon us, he answered. We do indeed, Father, for such is the law of the Church. But you loved Abélard, and you have a child by him; these

ties are strong, and you have not yet told me how the conviction grew in you that it was God's will that you should enter the religious life. After my marriage I was unhappy, Héloïse said. But, my dear daughter, the priest interposed, marriage should have soothed your conscience. I was unhappy, Héloïse continued, for it lay with me to say when my marriage should be made public. I denied my marriage to those to whom my uncle was proclaiming it, and my obstinacy was so great that my uncle came to believe that I had lost my wits when I related how I had striven against the marriage in Brittany. And why did you strive against the marriage in Brittany? the priest asked. I can give no other reason, Héloïse answered, than that it was the will of God I should come hither. You are sure of that? As sure as one can be, she replied, of anything in this world. As there seemed to be no issue to my trouble I left my uncle's house one night to find Abélard in his lodging and told him of the great change God had operated in me. Let us kneel down together and pray, Abélard said, and we knelt and prayed; and when we rose to our feet he took me in his arms and said: Héloïse, I too have been striving against God's will, but God's will is stronger than we.

The priest did not answer but sat like one overcome and overawed, and Héloïse, seeing that he believed all she had told, rejoiced secretly. It seems to me, daughter, said the priest at last, that you have spoken out of your heart. As well as I know how, she answered. Miracle upon miracle! said Hubert; Abélard the headstrong has submitted to the Church. He always opposed the Nominalism of Roscelin, Héloïse answered dryly; his Nominalism was his own and you know how he expressed it—— Yes, yes, said the priest, I know that he has striven to draw fine distinction between the ultra-Nominalism of Roscelin and the ultra-Realism of Champeaux; but



Abélard himself and the Prioress are waiting, and this is not the moment to discuss his philosophy. You wish to enter the religious life? Héloïse answered: I do.

The priest rang a bell and a few seconds afterwards Abélard, the Prioress, the two Mothers, Mother Hilda and Mother Ysabeau, and Stephen, the convent chaplain, entered. You have talked together, and I hope that Héloïse has satisfied you that she wishes to enter the religious life? the Prioress said. Héloïse has answered all my questions, Hubert replied, and I am satisfied that our dear daughter has been brought hither by the grace of God. Then let us thank God, the Prioress said, dropping upon her knees, and the others, men and women, could not do else but fall upon their knees, join their hands, and pray, or simulate prayer. It seemed to Hubert that he would be lacking in courtesy if he did not ask Stephen to pray aloud, which he did, and when their prayers were finished they rose to their feet; and it seeming to Hubert that they had yielded mayhap unduly to their emotions, he said, abruptly, addressing the twain: you are aware of the meaning of this act? It has occupied your thoughts, and you have considered it? Héloïse and Abélard answered that they had; a pen was handed to them, and they added their signatures to the scroll of parchment, and stood waiting while the witnesses appended their names to the deed. And then, addressing Stephen, Hubert, the Prioress, Mother Ysabeau and Mother Hilda, Héloïse said: if it seem to you good my husband and myself would like to confer together before we part. We have a child in Brittany, Abélard added, who has been overlooked in the strain of these days, and we crave a few minutes together to speak of our child's welfare. A few minutes in the orchard, said Héloïse, if it please you to grant us this brief delay. The unexpected request seemed to embarrass Hubert more than it did Stephen, but to refuse to allow the wedded to speak a few words privately before



they parted seemed ungracious. Before we part, Abélard said, to meet for ever in the blessed communion of the saints and angels—— The Archbishop will offer up a Mass that you may be given strength to persevere, Hubert interjected, and on these words Abélard took his wife's hand in his and led her away.

Dost think, Abélard, that the request of a few last minutes together put a thought into their minds that we are playing a double game? And she told him the answers she had made to the priest's questions. The Prioress suspects nothing, he answered, but we must not delay long. Abélard, Abélard, it is hard to part from thee, and even now we can ask for the scroll if—— I know how small and mean is the life of nuns, but I shall be able to bear it and adopt all subterfuge and trickery indispensable. Where lies and trickery, subterfuge and deceit, prevail, where snares and nets are set about us, we cannot do else than use the same weapons against our enemies as they use against us. And God knows, Abélard said, that snares have been set for me often enough, and if I have not fallen into any it is for that my enemies did not set their snares cunningly. Champeaux and Anselm—— We have but a few minutes to speak, Héloïse interrupted; thou'lt not raise up difficult questions in Paris, but wilt lean to the side of the Church? Ah, said Abélard, now thy finger is set on the spot that may bring our enterprise to naught, for no man can make himself different from what he is, and were it possible for me to become a Champeaux or an Anselm, it would avail me nothing, for as thou knowest, Champeaux, when he began under pressure of my argument to abandon the outworks of his defences against Nominalism, found himself alone in his school, deserted by all but three or four faithful adherents in the benches, his power gone from him. One thing and one thing only interests the world at this moment—— Nominalism and Realism. Were I to yield a point, the Church would no

longer fear me, and I shall receive nothing from the Church except through fear. We must not shrink from the means whereby we are to attain our end, she said; a great enterprise is always set with snares, and my business is to wait till thou returnest to me, a priest. But should the convent have its own way with thee, he said, and mould thee to its own idea? I have thought of that, she answered; we are always changing, but I shall not fail thee and do thou not fail me. Thou'rt free now; I am no longer a hitch, a hindrance, a stumbling-block, and having won so much as a simple cleric, as a bishop thou canst not fail to win all: Bishop of Lyons, of Paris, of Toulouse, she said. If great victories await me in any one of these bishoprics, how much greater would my victories be were I Pope. Thy genius, Abélard, would be wasted in the papal chair. Once thou didst speak differently, Héloïse—— Yes, in my childhood, she interjected quickly, I said I wished to see thee in the papal chair, but now I am a woman and understand things better. Thy gift from God was philosophy, and popes are not philosophers but administrators, and philosophy and administration have never yet been joined in the same man. And when didst thou come to think like this? he asked. At this very moment, she answered. Bishops are often philosophers, Abélard replied, and, as thou sayest, a pope is but an administrator. But how knowest thou these things? I know them, she answered, for I lovèd thee, and all that concerns thee is clear to me, though the rest be dark.

Here I remain, Héloïse said, as they walked from the river up the broad path between the orchard trees, watching the peaked roofs of the convent and a sky full of sunny blue, with great white clouds ascending, but without threat of rain. I remain here, Abélard, waiting for thee, she said, her voice quiet and subdued, it seeming to him that she was absorbing all his will and that he

could not do else but obey. I wait for thee, it may be two or three years, no matter ; I shall wait, and my heart will not lighten till tidings reach me of thy ordination ; and then—— We will not look further into the future. One thing more, she said ; we leave a child in Brittany, and my life here will be at times hard enough to bear, so thou wilt spare me any anxiety regarding our child ? Go to him, Abélard, if thou canst find the time, and if not send Madelon a letter. And now, farewell, for if we remain talking together any longer the delay will put suspicion into the minds of those whose minds should be free from suspicion.

### CHAP. XXX.

EVER since her marriage, before it in Brittany, almost from the moment when she turned from the baby's cot at the sound of Abélard's footsteps and voice, she had been at struggle, but not with herself, for the course of her life and her fate became clear to her during the months she spent in Brittany ; in her mind's eye she saw her life winding like a road breaking out in different places, leading to what mysterious bourne—to Abélard's victory ? For nothing less would she have surrendered Abélard, for nothing less would he have surrendered her. At that moment something seemed to break in her mind suddenly, and afraid that she was about to lose control of herself and might speak without judgment or yield to the temptation of some extravagant act, she rose from the bench at the end of the broad walk and turned into the orchard, and upon a heap of dead leaves abandoned herself to the intoxication of her dream, rejoicing in it from within, admiring it from without, seeing herself always contrite, humble, and even meek, three masks that she must wear in turn. Never must she be seen

without one of them, neither by nun nor by priest, till Abélard returned to her, in one, two, or maybe three years. A long waiting it will be, she said; but we have to wait many months for the smallest seed to rise out of the ground; and two or three years are but a little while to wait for his ordination: ten years but a moment if his teaching prevail.

The inner vision faded and the outer rose before her—Abélard returning bearing tidings of his ordination so plainly in his eyes that words were not needed; and so intense was the vision that she swooned in imagination in his arms, the darkness growing dimmer till the dream scroll was again unrolled, and she became aware of the thick atmosphere of groined roofs and pillars, windows like rich jewels, gold vestments, white surplices, the dusky flames of the candles and heard the Mass chanted amid choirs and banners and the swinging of censers till at last the throng divided, and in the centre of the nave Abélard appeared, a gold mitre on his head and the shepherd's staff in his hand.

The multitude passed away; none remained, and in the silence of stale incense she waited for him to come from the sacristy. But he did not come, and when the cathedral melted like a cloud, it was in an avenue of clipped limes that she waited, tremulous, for ahead of her was a dark figure who could not be else than Abélard coming to her with the joyful tidings that the reign of reason was nigh—and himself triumphant, equal to Plato and Aristotle. Yes, it was he coming towards her with slow step, loitering in the patterned path. Her heart seemed to stand still lest he should stop or return whence he came. A dream it was and no more, she knew it, but in her waking life his lips never procured a tenderer mood of pleasure than she enjoyed now upon a heap of weeds and grasses in a corner of the convent orchard, and she prayed that no straying



sister should come to interrupt or ruffle her dream. None came and her ecstasy continued hour after hour, weakening a little towards evening, till she returned to herself fully and lay with her eyes open, seeing a large, tumultuous sky with an opening in the clouds forming a sort of silver shield, which she was prone to accept as a sign from God and to associate with Abélard, who, in her eyes, was a knight going forth in quest of the soul that the Church had buried in a dungeon long ago. But, though in chains, the soul never dies, and when the great silver shield in the sky disappeared she was walking through the orchard saying to herself: to-morrow I shall wear a habit and shall be cold in it; and again her thoughts took flight, and she walked on exalted by the vision of the great philosopher missionary going forth, a silver shield on his arm. It was then that a long trail of fragrant smoke swept across her face and she spied an old peasant raking dried leaves into a distant corner, throwing them upon the smouldering fire without drawing any thought from his seasonable work, living as the husbandmen lived in the *Georgics*, a shadowy figure in the evening landscape. We are all gathering dead leaves for the burning, she said, and to soothe her aching mind she walked straight to the convent library, and thanked God that it was empty.

And while thinking before the shelves how much more precious would be a letter from Abélard than any book she might take down, she opened Seneca, and her eyes lighted on a passage in a letter written to his friend, Lucilius: you write to me often, and I thank you; you bring yourself before me as best you may; and whenever I get one of your letters we are together again. If the portraits of our absent friends soothe us, if they quicken remembrance, vain and deceptive consolation, and lighten the regret we feel at their absence, how much dearer to us are the letters that bring the very hand-

writing, the sign-manual of the absent friend? How true, how true, she sighed, and was moved to send the words to Abélard; so full were they of kindly affection that they could not do else than bring him to a table and compel him to write to her, so it seemed. But the pen she picked up fell from her hand, and she sat remembering that it was agreed she should remain in the convent, giving no sign till she heard from him. Why, therefore, should she break the covenant? Her letter might fall into other hands, and not even quotations from Seneca's letter to Lucilius were safe, for how else could the quotation be interpreted except as an invitation to correspond: write to me, for I am hungry and thirsty for the sight of thee, and since I may not see thee, write, for such tidings as a letter brings soothe.

She must not write, nor even ask for news of him, and she wearied of saying to herself: no news is good news. As day passed over day almost reproaches against Abélard and against herself began to arise, with memories of the words she had spoken to him as they walked down the orchard path by the very seat she was now leaning on. And now all that she had said seemed lies, yet she had said nothing that was not in her heart at the while. How hard it is to speak the truth, she said. It escapes like water that we would hold in our hands. I told him that I must remain in this convent so that he might become a priest; I wished for his advancement and I wish for it still, for fameless Abélard would not be Abélard. So said I, and to-day am no longer sure that Abélard would not be Abélard to me, the master of my heart and body, on a desert island forgotten by all men. That is my truth to-day; to-morrow's is hidden. It may be this: let Abélard be given back to me and common man dwell in the dungeon he built for himself. Never did I seek in Abélard anything but himself, without thought that a ray of his glory might fall upon me. It was his will

and not mine that I had at heart always and sought to gratify. I would have preferred the name of mistress, of concubine or light-of-love, to that of wife; and never would have consented to that fatal marriage had it not been that I was afraid of the hireling's dagger.

It was not later than three months after he had left her that the black thought came into her mind that she was a dupe perhaps, for it might be that he had accepted her proposal to enter a convent so that he might rid himself of her. She had, it is true, spoken of the convent as a way out of the difficulty in which her marriage put them, a marriage that she had opposed to the last and only consented to lest a refusal should make her seem less worthy in his eyes. It was always to show him that he was first in my thoughts that I spoke of this convent. But now I can see that he never loved me; it was not love, but lies. For now he has no thought for me, not even enough to bring him to a table to write a letter, and she watched the river flowing and the passing boats, till, awakening from a vague sense of sorrow, she asked herself what Abélard would think of her, and how unworthy he would deem her, if he knew the thoughts that were passing through her mind. For why should I suspect him of treachery? Why, indeed? Is it because I love him beyond all things that shameful thoughts cross my mind? Life is a strange thing, for here sits a suspicious woman, as different as may be from the woman that sat by him on this bench a few weeks ago.

Sister Héloïse, are you not cold sitting here in this bleak wind watching the craft going up and down the river? Héloïse uttered a little cry, and turning she saw Mother Hilda. We have been looking for you, Mother Hilda continued, for news has come of Pierre Abélard. News of him? Where is he? cried Héloïse. In the monastery of Saint-Denis, Hilda answered. In the monastery of Saint-Denis! Héloïse repeated, and she stood



looking into Mother Hilda's pretty, pointed, freckled face, lighted with round, kind eyes. Yes; we know for certain that he is with the monks, but why does it startle you to hear that he is at Saint-Denis? I was not thinking of a cowl, Héloïse said, for there is no monk in Abélard, but a great prelate who will be an honour to the Church. Mother Hilda looked enquiringly into Héloïse's eyes and then answered: he may have gone to the monastery to prepare for his ordination. A retreat, Héloïse said, and seeing that her presence was needed Hilda sat by her and took her hand, saying: Héloïse, why are you overcome like this? and Héloïse answered, hardly aware of the words she was uttering: a priest, yes, but not a monk. Mother Hilda repeated that most likely Abélard had gone to the monastery of Saint-Denis for the retreat that is usual before ordination. You would not lose him, she said, though you are separated you are not divided; your interests are still his. You would see him a great prelate but not a humble monk. Do you blame me, Hilda? No, I do not blame you; maybe I should feel as you do if I had married a great man. You are feeling better now; let us walk together, for it is cold sitting here, and you will tell me of Abélard's philosophy and the great service his ideas will be to the Church, much troubled now by the rival schools of Nominalism and Realism and the licentious lives of troubadours in the south and the not less licentious lives of trouvères in the north, and Courts of Love, whose only virtue is the singing of a song correctly, lute-playing, and fidelity to another man's wife. Abélard's aim, Héloïse replied, is to show that neither the Realists nor the Nominalists are altogether right, that the true path lies between the extreme of Realism as taught by Champeaux and the extreme form of Nominalism as it was taught by Roscelin, who has submitted to the Church. We shall be less likely to meet any of the sisters if we walk this way, Sister Héloïse, less likely to meet Angela or Cecilia, for



either of these will be glad to join us, and three cannot talk out of their hearts.

Héloïse would have welcomed an interruption from Angela or Cecilia, for she was afraid that the impulse to open her heart to Hilda might overcome her, and once she had spoken the truth she could not remain in the convent. Abélard was the law that was over her and were she to break this law the mainspring of her life would be broken; she therefore hardened her heart and talked to deceive Hilda as best she could that day and the next day and all through the winter, news coming from time to time to Argenteuil of Abélard's great success as a teacher, of the number of pupils that came to him and the fees they paid. A good thing for us are these fees, Sister Angela said, one windy day in March, to Héloïse; for these monks are always complaining of their poverty and casting covetous eyes on the lands which we hold on lease from them.

The watermen were casting cargo into the river to lighten the barge, and Héloïse did not hear Sister Angela till she said that Abélard had left the monastery of Saint-Denis. Do you think, Sister Angela, said Héloïse, that our love for one another has ceased? It is true, she continued, that I am now his sister in Jesus Christ and that he is my brother in Christ. But we cannot separate ourselves from our earthly life, and Abélard's misfortunes are still mine. So he has left the monastery of Saint-Denis, and for why? Tell me, Sister Angela, all the news you have of him. All the news I have, Sister Angela answered, is that he blamed the abominations of the Abbot Adam, and became obnoxious to the monks, who were jealous of him. Of Abélard? Héloïse interjected. Yes, of Abélard, Sister Angela answered, and they welcomed his disciples when they came to beg him to resume his teaching, which he has done, establishing a school at Maisonnelle on lands belonging to the Count

of Champagne. You say he has opened a school at Maisoncelle? Héloïse said. Yes; and students come from all parts of the country. His theological lectures attract and win many over to his side, and his lectures on Latin literature many more. The world, it would seem, asks for nothing better than to listen to him. But what are the abominations that caused him to leave the monastery, Sister Angela? Wine-drinking and lute-playing, Sister Angela answered, and where gleemen go they bring gleemaidens with them, and singing boys too, whom the monks prefer to the maidens, their love being more ardent, so it is said. Yet these same monks seek to defame our convent, spreading stories about Sister Paula (you were with us when her baby was born), and about Sister Agnes, who left us last year for a minstrel. His wont was to sail up the river in the summer evenings, anchor his boat under the reeds yonder, and sing; his singing won her away from us. Whither was she rowed? Héloïse asked. We never heard of her again. I do not know why I asked for news of her, Héloïse replied dolefully. Tell me about Abélard. We hold these lands on lease from the monks of Saint-Denis, Sister Angela answered, and the lease goes far back, two or three hundred years. I've heard it said that the monks have lost any rights they may have had. But for some whiles they have been pressing their claim, and to gain sympathy they try to defame our convent, spreading stories of our convent chaplain and the school children. Against Stephen! cried Héloïse. Such calumny cries to heaven for punishment, Angela replied, and I should be no wise astonished to hear that fire descended from heaven on their monastery. It was to stay the calumny and the rumours they set going against us that our Prioress wished to strengthen the rule, but we, myself among the dissidents, said: we will obey the rule we have vowed to obey, but not new rules. The rules are severe enough, and

were made by men; monks go back and forth from their monastery, they follow the Crusaders to Palestine, but we are here always, and life is harder upon women in religion than on men. You were telling me, Sister Angela, that we hold the lands of Argenteuil on lease from the monks of Saint-Denis. Yes, that is so, Angela replied, and I have often wondered what would become of us if the monks of Saint-Denis succeed in breaking the lease we hold and possessing themselves of our property. We should have to seek other convents, and if none would take us in I suppose many of us would return to our parents. But would our parents welcome us? Would they even let us inside their doors? We should have to go away with *trouvères*, who like nuns, it is said. One liked Sister Agnes and she is at least as happy with him as she was with us. She was not happy as a nun? Héloïse asked. I do not think any are happy here, or only those who pass on from the school to the novitiate before they find their sex, Angela answered.

My sister, she said, breaking the pause, used to sit half asleep among women, but when a man came into the room she awoke, and I often wondered at the change, for though I was the elder I was at that time without sex. Your sister is married? Héloïse said. Yes, Sister Angela replied; but I didn't know I was a woman till I was four and twenty and now I am eight and twenty, and the last four years have been a torment to me. That is why, Sister Héloïse, it is hard to understand how you twain, each possessed of the other's love, could have been so ruthless. Ruthless, Héloïse replied. Yes, Sister Angela answered quickly, if our lives were given to us that we might live them; and has not our Lord said that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage? But, Sister Angela, it seems to me that despite your chastity, perhaps because of it, you fail to understand that love has a spiritual side. In the end, no doubt, but in the

beginning love is but a chance, Sister Angela said. . . . My meeting with Abélard seemed to be but a chance, Héloïse answered, for I know not why I turned into the city instead of crossing the Great Bridge to seek the violets that were coming up in the woods. The springtime was in your feet and sent you forth in search of love, said Angela, to which Héloïse replied that she could not love any other man but Abélard; and Angela answered her with a courage born of long abstinence: it pleases you to think that, Sister Héloïse, but if there were no Abélard, if he had never been born, you do not think that you would have descended into your grave a virgin, do you? If Abélard had never been born! As well ask me if I had never been born. But things being as they are, I could love none but Abélard. You will answer me that question again when you have been some years in the convent, Angela replied cynically, and Héloïse felt that she hated this nun, and vowing that she would not speak intimately with her again, she fell to thinking that it was strange that chastity should look into the heart of love so clearly and judge it to be lust.

#### CHAP. XXXI.

MY marriage! she said, and fell to thinking of the dismal swamp it had led her into, and from which there seemed no hope of escape. It was the Prioress's voice that awoke her: dear Héloïse, thou'rt too given to brooding, and without just cause, for we know that he must be preparing for his ordination at Saint-Denis. But, Mother, if he were preparing for his ordination he wouldn't have left Saint-Denis to establish a school at Maisoncelle. And his teaching, whatever it may be, will make it difficult for him to find a bishop to ordain him. Then why should he have returned to Saint-Denis? the Prioress asked, taken



aback. I have sought for a reason, Héloïse replied, but haven't found any sufficient one. There seems to be something behind this of which we know nothing, dear Mother, for though God may have commanded him to put on a monk's habit, so that he may forget me, God certainly did not command him to leave me in trouble, in pain, in grief, when a few simple words sent hither would relieve me. His silence is strange, of a certainty, said the Prioress, and it seems to me that I should be justified in allowing thee to leave the convent for a few days; three would be enough to set thy mind at rest, or shall I send our peasant? Abélard knows where I am, Héloïse answered, and if he has not sent a letter it is because he deems it well to keep silent. He knows where I am; it would be wrong of me to write, dear Mother. It is the lot of men and women to suffer in this life, women perhaps more than men; so God in his supreme wisdom has settled it and we must obey his decrees. Nothing can be changed; things cannot be else than as they are.

Héloïse hid her face in her hands, and hearing her sob the Prioress withdrew from the library; and Héloïse wept, for she remembered that she had known from the first that marriage would bring about his ruin. Almost from their wedding day their ruin had begun, and her device to break the marriage seemed of no avail. Our plight, she said, was never worse than it is to-day, for while I am waiting to receive the veil, Abélard wears the cowl. I am led blindfold; all is darkness about me. And in her despair she began to consider how she might appear a creditable human being to the mothers and to the nuns, diverting their suspicions always, representing herself as a true daughter of the Church, whereas there was nothing true in her except her love for Abélard, whom she would follow into the gulfs of hell rather than live in paradise without him. A vain and lonely place paradise would be without Abélard; shadowy as the world

she saw about her when she left the library and walked into the open air. All things seemed to have receded, and in the void Abélard was. At every hour of the day, even at the sacrifice of the Mass, she was thinking of him; and like the clouds of the air her thoughts disappeared and collected again, always different and always the same, beginning from the point at which they ceased three weeks before, curling and going out as before. She had parted from him in the belief that her next news would be his ordination and she now heard that he was wearing a monk's cowl in the monastery of Saint-Denis. But is it true? It cannot be that he has entered a monastery without telling me. For why should he? For why, dear God? Say why. He knows where I am, yet he does not write. He knows that I suffer in this silence, yet he lets me suffer. But he does this for some good reason. Therefore I will keep the troth that I plighted, and though false in all else I will be true to him, remaining here till he comes.

My recompense will be greater for what I have suffered, and her thoughts melting suddenly, she sat, forgetful of all things, absorbed in a vague sense of sorrow. Once a priest, she said, he will be able to impose his will. The first bishopric available will fall to him, and my name at least will not appear among the list of women that have proved to be the scourge of genius. A warning in Proverbs against women rose up in her mind: now, my son, hearken to me and be attentive to the words of my mouth; let thy heart not be drawn into the ways of woman, lose not thyself in her paths, for she has tripped and overthrown a great number; the strongest have been killed by her, her house is the way to hell, and she leads to the gulfs of death. And again: I have pondered everything with the eyes of my soul and have found woman bitterer than death; she is the net of the hunter; her heart is a snare; her hands are chains;

he who pleaseth God escapes her, but the sinner is her prey.

She remembered too that from the beginning the first woman brought about the banishment of man from paradise, and she who was created by the Lord to come to his help was the instrument of his fall. The man whose birth was announced by an angel was brought to naught by Delilah; it was she who gave him up to his enemies, and he was brought to such despair that he buried himself and them under the ruins of the temple. Solomon, the wisest of the wise, lost his reason through a woman, who roused him to such a fury of mind that he, whom the Lord had chosen to build his temple in preference to David, his father, fell into idolatry and remained in it till the end of his days; his heart closed to the worship of the true God, whose glory he had celebrated by written and spoken words and whose teaching he had made known. It was against his wife that Job, that holy man, fought the last and hardest fight of all; the cunning tempter knew this well enough, having learnt the truth through experience that men found always a reason for their fall in women. With Abélard it was different, for he lost by marriage what he had not lost through lust, the devil accomplishing evil with good, not being able to do evil with evil. Meditation followed upon meditation, ending always in a yearning discontent, in a cry of weariness: has he forgotten me, who can never forget him? And very often the words: who can never forget him, threw her backwards into such memories of the love they had shared together that she could not do else than write the tortures her love of him put upon her, in the hope that they might be lessened by translation from the flesh into spirit. But why do I talk of the evil one? I, a prisoner in this convent, put here by his will and by my own, but more by his will than by mine, for there is no repentance in my heart for the sins that we have committed nor any

acknowledgment to the Church that I have sinned, nor could hell, were it open before me, force me to regret my sins, if they were sins. Is there then no forgiveness for those who love outside the bonds of wedlock? None. For those who have loved truly may not regret. All this I know full well, for my own heart tells me that this is true. The joys of love that Pierre and myself have tasted together were so sweet that the remembrance could not be displeasing to me, however much I may be brought to Godward, even unto God himself. Whichever side I look, memories rise up before me, and I am taken again with the desires that they awaken, fallacious images that leave me no peace even in sleep. Nor even at Mass, for at the solemn moment of consecration, when prayer should be pure and at height, licentious thoughts rise up unbidden and will not be put away, and I sigh and tears start to my eyes that Abélard is not by me that I might sin once more with him. The hours and the places of every act and deed, together with his image, are engraved upon my heart, and so clearly that I am transported to these places and back to the hours, committing again the same acts, the same deeds, even in sleep, in sleep more intensely than in waking. The very movement of my body betrays the thoughts of my soul, and the words that I said in his ear are spoken again by me.

After writing a few pages she remembered that she had promised to abide by his will, and the thought stopped her hand. He knows where I am and if the words I have written were to fall into the hands of his enemies my letter would be cited in testimony against him and our lot be worse than before. He has not forgotten me, that cannot be, so there is a cause for his silence, though I cannot guess it; something has befallen him. But what can have befallen him? And with this question before her constantly, almost vindictively, she was sitting in the library when the opening of the library



door awoke her; and Héloïse, weary of her thoughts, welcomed the Prioress's intrusion—it was almost one, for this corner of the library (a little room in itself) had come to be looked upon as almost privy to Héloïse. Art busy, my dear child, with thy writings? Busy, dear Mother? What matter if I were, and what could be my business? Our thoughts and the control of them are our business always, the Prioress answered. A reproof this seemed to Héloïse, and her face darkened, causing the Prioress to regret her words, for she was the bearer of ill news and had come to the library thinking how she might break the news lightly; and in her dread of having pained Héloïse unnecessarily, she stumbled forthright into the heart of her story, omitting all preparations, saying: Héloïse, my dear child, I am the bringer of serious news. He is not dead, Mother? Héloïse asked, her cheeks blanching. No, he is not dead, the Prioress replied. Some injury has befallen him? Héloïse interjected. The Prioress's face changed; a look of pity passed over it, but she recovered herself quickly and answered that Abélard was well. What then has happened? Héloïse cried. Something has happened; thy face tells me thou'rt the bearer of evil news, so speak quickly, dear Mother. My dear, I would have broken the news gently to thee. O Mother, tell me quickly. Abélard was summoned before a council assembled at Soissons and was ordered to throw his book into a fire in the market-place, reciting the Athanasian Creed from a scroll like a little child, as if he did not know it by heart. But he defended himself? said Héloïse. He did indeed, and his defence was worthy of his genius; the Pope's legate, Conan, was for an acquittal.

But O, it is a long story, Héloïse, and I am not gifted to tell it as it should be told. He will defeat his enemies in the end, Héloïse cried, and there was a note of joy in her voice, for she knew now that Abélard could

not write to her in the midst of a trial for heresy. I would hear the whole story, Mother, from the day he entered the monastery of Saint-Denis. But if his enemies triumphed, however short-lived their triumph may be, a punishment has been meted out to him. What is that punishment? Héloïse asked. Besides the burning of his book he was condemned to a term of imprisonment in the monastery of Saint-Médard. A term of imprisonment, Héloïse muttered. But why did he become a monk, and why did he leave the monastery? I cannot tell thee, the Prioress answered, why he became a monk, but he left the monastery of Saint-Denis at the request of the Abbot and the brethren, whose vices he had spoken against in public and privily, and at the request of his disciples, who begged him to set up a school of philosophy, saying that students would come from all parts of the world to hear him, which was no more than the truth, for when he set up his school at Maisongelle the neighbourhood was not large enough to contain them all. He taught theology, cried Héloïse. He did. But it was his lectures on the poetry of Virgil and Ovid and Tibullus that emptied the rival schools, the Prioress answered. I cannot tell the story fully and do not know how it began to be put about that he should not be allowed to teach theology—— Because he was not a priest, Héloïse interjected. It could not have been else, the Prioress answered, for it was proved that he taught nothing contrary to the teaching of the Church. But, Mother, the term of imprisonment. The term of imprisonment, the Prioress repeated; I am afraid that no term was mentioned. No term mentioned! cried Héloïse. The words were: perpetual seclusion in a monastery, the Prioress answered, and Héloïse stood staring like one daft, her thoughts upset, her mind and her face awry, recovering herself a little when the Prioress said: but the legate, Conan, will remit the sentence. It is understood that it cannot be longer

than a few months ; it may not be longer than a few weeks. But, my dear child, had I known the news would affect thee like this, I would not have told thee. Take heart ; the sentence is merely nominal. Sister Josiane will return presently and she will tell the story better than I. Methinks now that I should not have ventured into it at all. Stephen—— It was he, Héloïse interrupted, who brought the news ? The Prioress answered that it was, and that all France was speaking of the sentence. But the nuns will not speak of it to thee, only Sister Josiane, who can tell the story better than anybody else. He made a great defence ? Héloïse asked, and the Prioress answered that the excellence of his defence irritated the Council, and he was advised to withdraw it.

#### CHAP. XXXII.

I HAVE just learnt, Sister Josiane, that Pierre Abélard, once my husband, now my brother in Jesus Christ, was condemned at Soissons to throw his book on the Trinity into the flames whilst reading aloud the Athanasian Creed. He is now a prisoner in the monastery of Saint-Médard, so much I have learnt from the Prioress, but it appears that there is hope that the papal legate, Conan, will release him soon ; perhaps at once. You can imagine my grief, Sister, so begin the story, which the Prioress says nobody will be able to tell as well as you—not even our chaplain, who brought the news.

Sister Josiane laid her book aside and the two women stood looking at each other, Héloïse thinking that she read annoyance at the interruption in the tall Breton's flat face, lighted with round, pale, wandering eyes, in whom she seemed to trace a likeness to Madelon ; which was strange, if it were true, for no women were more

different in shape, Madelon being short and round and Sister Josiane tall and thin, the nearest thing that Héloïse had ever seen to a plank in a human being, in front like a plank and behind nearly as flat; a rumpless, bosomless woman, with thin shoulders and long thin arms, and untidy brown hair often slipping from underneath her coif. Héloïse was never sure whether she was attracted or repelled by Sister Josiane, for she was both by turns. A sour, evil-visaged woman, she would say, and again she was won by the kindly nature of the sister, which responded at once to the claim of physical suffering—Héloïse herself had been ill once or twice and other nuns had been ill, and Sister Josiane attended upon them all, never making complaint. She responds to human suffering, Héloïse often said to herself; she is gentle and kind in front of it and obdurate only in ideas. She would watch by my sick-bed hour after hour, but if it were to save my life she could not concede that Abélard is a master philosopher. She almost laughed in my face when I compared him with Plato and Aristotle; it would have been better if she had, for laughter is not cruel like contempt; and Héloïse bethought herself how contempt lingered about those thin lips and that horrid little perky, insolent, lumpy nose. Two minutes after Héloïse had laughed at her anger, saying to herself: Josiane is hard and narrow in her ideas, inflexible in them; but we like her as we like a surly dog who will not make friends with us. But if you would read his books, Sister, Héloïse remembered saying, you would— Agree with you, Sister, Josiane answered, that he is greater than Plato and Aristotle? Now you are sneering, Héloïse replied. But though we may not compare the present with a past so far away, you will admit, I think, that Abélard is the greatest philosopher that has lived since antiquity.

There lived in France three hundred years ago a philosopher to whom all the world is indebted, the one



original mind since Plato and Aristotle and equal to them, Sister Josiane had answered sharply. Who may that one be? Héloïse asked. John Scotus Erigena? Sister Josiane's sour face lighted up at the sound of the name, her face became pleasant to look upon and Héloïse learned from her that John Scotus was an Irishman who left the barbarians at home and came to France and taught at the Court of Charles the Bald. Sister Josiane took down his *Treatise on Predestination*, and after reading to Héloïse for an hour, she began to expound the master, saying: I will make plain the master's thought, which is not for everybody. To be among the goats, as it is said in our language of images, which is not the language of pure intellect, only means living the happy life of human beings according to nature, and the teaching of the master is that to live the separate life is not to forfeit the eternal life; for all things return to God ultimately, all things being of God; nothing is lost; but deification is not for these livers of the separate life, but for some men and some angels only, as we are given to understand from the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. The foolish represent those who seek only natural goods; by the wise are signified those whose thoughts turn to the identity of all things with God. A master mind is surely plain in these lines, and at some other time I should like to read to you *On the Division of Nature*, the master's great work, thrown into a dialogue between master and pupil, and when you——

Héloïse remembered rising to her feet thinking she would never speak again except on plain matters of business to Sister Josiane, whom she suspected of forcing her, by the deliberate repetition of the word master, to acquiesce in the belief that Abélard was not an original but merely a secondary mind. But the love of conquest brings us back to the surly dog that will not accept our friendship, and Héloïse found it hard to sit in the

library reading without ever exchanging words with Sister Josiane, even when she needed her help, which she often did of late, for she knew little of philosophy and was puzzled by the idiom; and when the reconciliation, which could not be long delayed, came about one day in the library, Héloïse could not help smiling at the words spoken behind her: so you are reading the master? It was Sister Josiane, who had come in without Héloïse hearing her, so buried was she in the master's great work. The master is sometimes hard to follow, said Sister Josiane, but he is worth following, and the recompense helps us to forget the pain that we have endured. The voice sounded so friendly in her ears that Héloïse brightened and broke into speech suddenly as a bird will into song. For the word master offended her no longer. She began to like to hear it on Sister Josiane's lips, and soon after she began to be attracted by Josiane's stories of the master, and to see him in her imagination in great rages in his classroom at the Court of Alfred the Great, where he was stabbed and killed by his pupils, who could not bear with his evil temper; such was their excuse for the murder. A wonderful and symbolic death, she said, for is it not so always? Children devour their fathers. Sister Josiane did not answer, and Héloïse guessed her thoughts to be an aversion for the story told of the master's death. I cannot but think, Sister Josiane, that if you had lived three hundred years ago you would have loved John Scotus. For we women, she added, are attracted by men's minds; and waited for Sister Josiane to answer, but she did not answer, nor even raise her eyes.

And now as the two women stood looking at each other, Héloïse anxious to hear the reasons for the burning of the book on the Trinity from Sister Josiane, the words were remembered, and Josiane's heart was again softened to Héloïse. Tell me, Héloïse said, the story of his trial

at Soissons. The Prioress has sent me to hear it from you, for you, Sister, more than any other in the convent, can tell it, so she says; and I know that you would have suffered if *On the Division of Nature* were burnt publicly with or without the recital of the Athanasian Creed. I should indeed, Sister Josiane answered, and it pains me to hear the story that is told of his death; I hope it is not true. True or false, it is a long time ago, said Héloïse. Does that make any difference? Sister Josiane asked gently, and Héloïse had to ask her again to tell the story of the trial at Soissons, how it came about and who provoked it.

His popularity provoked it, Sister Josiane answered; if John Scotus had had as many pupils as Abélard, he too would have been persecuted. But what, said Héloïse, were the charges that were brought against Abélard's teaching?—for charges there must have been. That is what I am craving to hear, and none but you can tell me. Our chaplain——, Sister Josiane interposed. But his telling would be prejudiced or might be, his interest being in religion as it is taught rather than in true religion as it exists in the mind, interrupted Héloïse. It may be that Stephen is more attached to dogma and doctrine than I am. Abélard, Héloïse answered, is more concerned to make plain the truth that we can only believe in what we understand, and that it is absurd to teach to others what we do not understand ourselves, and that in saying as much he is taking his lesson from our Lord himself, who blamed the blind for leading the blind. That is his teaching, neither more nor less, and it is one that all reasonable people must approve of, for who is there who would confess himself to be unreasonable? But man's passions are a valley between him and reason, Sister Josiane answered, and Abélard's success has brought him many enemies, Albéric and Lotulfe. Yes, it was these who began the attack ever since the



death of Anselm and Champeaux, Héloïse answered. They have watched Abélard, seeking ever an occasion for his undoing. Their school at Rheims, Josiane said, lost many pupils, and their complaint to Raoul, Archbishop of Rheims, passed unheeded at first ; but they continued their attacks, despite lack of success, and, wearied out, it appears that Raoul called to his aid Conan, the Bishop of Préneste, the Pope's legate in France, and the scandal becoming greater every day it was at last decided to call a Council together at Soissons and to invite Abélard to bring his famous book and defend it if he were able to do so. He lost no time, for though to defend oneself against heresy is nearly impossible, Abélard accepted the challenge at once. It seemed that he asked for nothing better than to bring to naught these charges that were always urged against him in secret. He might have pleaded that they could not try him for heresy in the province of Rheims, but—— But he never tries to evade any questions ; his hardihood none can doubt, Héloïse cried. I can see him going far as a conqueror, certain of his own power. He needed all his power, Josiane replied, on arriving at Soissons, for the clergy have preached against him, and the people were ready to slay him for having preached, saying there were three Gods, or that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are only modes or aspects of God ; nobody seems to know what he taught, except that it was heresy. But he escaped, Héloïse cried. Tell me what befell him, Sister Josiane. What next fell out may be guessed. Abélard went to Conan, the Pope's legate, and laid before him his book, saying that he bowed before his judgment if he should find anything in it that might be said truly to lead the reader away from the Catholic faith, and that he was ready to correct any error that could be discovered and to do penance for it, calling the legate's attention to a passage in the book itself in which he said as much. It appears that his frankness embarrassed the



legate, who gave him back his book, asking him to take it to the Archbishop and to his advisers, now become his accusers; and these read and re-read the book, weighing every word.

And whilst they were doing all this Abélard spoke to the people explaining his faith, making it intelligible to all, and he did this with so much skill that it began to be said in the towns: it is strange to hear one who is accused defend himself so well, and those who accuse obliged to hold their tongues, and it may hap that in the end the judges will be brought to see that the error is with them rather than with him. So did the folk talk, it is said, in the streets of Soissons, and the anger of the ecclesiastics was fanned by it till one day Albéric, surrounded by his friends, stopped Abélard in the street, and after a few polite words said to him: I notice in your book a passage which surprises me, for God having begotten God, it seems to me that you cannot do else than admit that God begot himself. That is a point I can make plain to you at once, Abélard answered; it is in truth the very theme of my essay on the Trinity, and if you wish I will demonstrate it according to the strict rules of logic. We set no store by logic, Albéric replied; we rely upon authority. Turn the leaf then and you will find my authority, Abélard answered, and he took the book from Albéric, who happened to have it with him. And it was the will of God that he should open it at the very page, his eyes falling on the passage, which Albéric had overlooked in his hurry to find something that would tell against Abélard—a quotation from St Augustine on the Trinity, Book One: he who believes it to be within the power of God to beget himself is mistaken as much in regard to God as he is in regard to every creature, spiritual or corporeal, for there is none that can beget himself. Albéric's followers were surprised and thrown into confusion, and to defend himself Albéric said it was necessary

that the whole thing should be explained. But there is nothing new in it, Abélard answered; you said that you put human reason aside, relying upon authority. I give you the text. If, of course, you wish to understand it, I am ready to make plain to you that if you hold any other opinion except the one I have expressed, you fall into the heresy that the Father is his own Son. How quick he is, Héloïse replied. He sees the point at once. At these words Albéric raised his fist, but he did not dare to strike and went away talking in his beard, declaring that neither authorities nor reasons would help Abélard in this issue. Go on with your story, Sister Josiane, tell me how it was that he was defeated, for they brought about his defeat, so I have heard, forcing him to burn his book with his own hand, condemning him to perpetual imprisonment in a distant monastery. Well, said Sister Josiane, on the last day of the Council, the legate and the Archbishop deliberated privily, for they were not certain how to act; all the clergy were not with them, and Godfrey de Léves, the Bishop of Chartres, notable for his piety and for his learning, called on the Council to remember that Abélard was a great philosopher, whose teaching was known, he might say, to all the world, and he warned them that if they were to condemn him without a public discussion many people would say he was condemned unjustly. But despite his earnestness the advice of Godfrey, Bishop of Chartres, was received with murmurs, and every now and then the joke went round that if the Council wished to show its wisdom to all and sundry, it could not do better than to enter into disputation with the celebrated wrangler.

Godfrey answered that Jesus was a more skilful disputant, yet Nicodemus desired that he should be heard out of respect for the law. And then, seeking for a way out of the dilemma, he asked for an adjournment of the debate, pleading that Abélard should be conducted back to his

monastery by his abbot, who was present, and that another Council of the most learned should be called who would look into the matter attentively and decide what was to be done. In difficult and thorny questions an adjournment of the debate is always welcomed. Conan rose and left the Privy Council to say Mass, and it was while on his way to the cathedral that he sent Abélard word that he would be acquitted. Indeed it seemed as if he were certain of an acquittal, but his enemies were powerful enough to persuade the Archbishop Raoul that for him to allow the Council at Soissons to adjourn without coming to a decision would be tantamount to an admission that he and all his coadjutors were unable to settle a theological point between them ; and, they added, Abélard will escape us if the matter be not settled by us ; for elsewhere we shall have no chance of getting a verdict condemning him, which we have a right to do, for why should he, who is not even a simple priest, publish these books without the consent of his own bishop or the Pope ! The Archbishop yielded to persuasion, and rising from his chair he made as good a case as he could against Abélard, saying that the Father was all-powerful, the Son was all-powerful, the Holy Ghost was all-powerful, and that anybody that held a contrary opinion should not be listened to. Whereupon Terrie, a professor of theology, answered with a quotation from St Ambrose : yet there are not three Almightyies, but only one Almighty, bringing upon himself a rebuke from the Archbishop. But Terrie refused to give way, and cried out the words of Daniel : it is those senseless sons of Israel that, without seeking verification of the truth, would compel a son of Israel. On this the Archbishop rose again and repeated his words, changing them a little to suit the need of the moment. It is without doubt the Father is all-powerful, the Son is all-powerful, and the Holy Ghost is all-powerful, and whosoever calls this dogma into question does not deserve to be heard.



All the same, it might be well that our brother should make a public confession of his faith, and Abélard was about to rise to confess and exhibit his faith, with the intention of developing it according to his wont, when his enemies interposed, saying that they did not wish for any words, for all that was needed was that he should recite the Athanasian Creed; and lest he should pretend ignorance of the text they put the book into his hand, telling him to read, which he did amid tears and sobs. And then, as one who had pleaded guilty, he was given into the charge of the Abbot of Saint-Médard, a sentence of confinement in that monastery being pronounced against him. But, cried Héloïse, what is hard to understand is why he did not persist in defending himself after obtaining the promise of the Archbishop that he would be given a hearing. He was advised, it is said, by the Bishop of Chartres not to insist, for any argument that he might use would anger the Council against him still further. He was persuaded by the Bishop to submit, and he did well, Sister Josiane said. To agree to a sentence, cried Héloïse, of imprisonment in the Abbey of Saint-Médard? A sentence only in name, Sister Josiane replied, for though the words were: perpetual seclusion in a monastery, it is certain the Pope's legate will remit the sentence and that he will be at liberty, if not in a few weeks at least no later than a few months. So that is the whole story? Héloïse said. The whole story, Héloïse, as told to us by Stephen, our chaplain, and we shall hear no more till the news comes of his release. Shall we go out? Sister Josiane asked, breaking the pause suddenly; the evening is fine.

Héloïse rose to her feet and the nuns walked out of the convent and stood looking at the river and the mists that were now rising in the valley, sweeping away shadows of distant hills and trees. Only half of the tall poplars could be seen above the white shroud and very little of the naked branches of the willows. Long herds of cattle came up



from the water-meadows, the convent cows in a long file, lowing to be relieved of their milk. The day is moving into night, nothing is ever still, said Héloïse; a tide is bearing us on, trees, river and animals alike. Hark to the cry of that bird. Only an owl, said Sister Josiane, and Héloïse was astonished that she should have recognised the cry as the owl's, for Sister Josiane saw and heard little. Her world was in her own mind, and she was thinking now not of the river nor of the fading of the fields from sight, but of some thought that John Scotus Erigena had set forth with startling originality. And she continued thinking, turning it in her mind, until Héloïse's sobs called her to her friend's aid. The story I have told you, she said, is a sad one, but there is this of hope in it, that the Pope's legate will release him from the monastery.

But it is not for his term of imprisonment that I am weeping, Héloïse answered, but for the sadness of all things. In this dim hour we feel that all things are hopeless and that we know nothing and can do little except to suffer pain. Open your eyes, Sister Josiane; forget the inner world you live in for a moment, for mists are rising; and the whisper of the river breaks my heart. But why should I ask you to see and to hear what breaks my heart? I am afraid, Sister Josiane, that I hardly know what I am saying at this moment. His book has been burnt and himself condemned to imprisonment in a monastery. What will be the next hap no man knows. Sister Josiane felt that Héloïse needed kind words; but she was unable to speak the words that would hearten her, that Abélard was as great a man as John Scotus, and the nuns walked towards the convent drawing their habits about them, for the night was cold though they were in May.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

THE theological chatter roused by the burning of Abélard's book at Soissons came to an end slowly in the convent of Argenteuil during the summer of 1121, and his name was not spoken once during the winter, not till the spring of the next year, in April, when Stephen returned from Paris one day with the news that everybody was asking what had become of Abélard, some saying that he had left France for England, to which Héloïse answered coldly that nothing was more likely than that he had gone to England to meditate on the Trinity, like Roscelin. Abélard considers the opinions of his enemies impartially, she said, with the view of finding what truth there may be in them rather than in the hope of discovering some crack in their arguments wherein to drive a wedge.

So, Héloïse, thy belief is that Abélard has gone to meditate on the mystery of the Trinity, like Roscelin, said the Prioress; and Roscelin's exile in England started her out on long flights of grey narratives, with which she hoped (perhaps) to entertain Héloïse, who sat opposite her, hearing but little, her thoughts far away among troubadours and gleemen, for she had begun to think that the sentence pronounced against Abélard at Soissons might have turned him from philosophy, and that in despair at the hatred of truth among men he might have travelled southward; and, under the name of Lucien de Marolle, found a place as gleeman in the court of some rich nobleman. But it could not be that he had forgotten his pledged faith and troth, and she began a letter:

The news that our chaplain, Stephen, has brought back from Paris is that all are asking: where is Abélard? some saying that, following the example of Roscelin, thou hast gone to England. But this I will not believe, for it is to me, who knows thee better than another, more likely that the shameful sentence pronounced against thee at

Soissons might have turned thee from philosophy to the composing and singing of songs as of yore. Were it not that I am here this would be easy to believe. But thou canst not have left me to the fate of a black Benedictine robe, not willingly, but the heart of man is dark to himself and to others, and who can say, even thyself, why thou hast left me without a letter for so long? It is not much to ask for, a few lines, an hour of thy time, that is all, and this thou wouldst have given long ago if reasons of which I know nothing did not prevent thee from writing. Then why do I allow evil thoughts of thee to come into my mind? For thou art not recognisable in a cruel treachery towards one who has never sought anything but to please thee rather than God. Thou hast not forgotten that it was thy wish rather than the love of God that made me take the veil? Abélard, write and soothe an aching heart. Soothe; the word brings back remembrances, and I would that thou wert by me to soothe the desires of my soul. Think not well of me, Abélard; do not believe in my courage but in my feebleness.

Her hand stopped suddenly, and, her eyes fixed on a far corner of the library, she said: he keeps silent for some good purpose. It cannot be that years will go by without some news drifting into the convent. So she tore up her letter, and, when, some months later, a story reached Argenteuil that Abélard was living as a hermit in a mud cabin by the river, she thanked God that she had not sent it. How lacking I should have seemed in his eyes had I sent that letter. And then, forgetful of herself, she began to consider the injustice of men as typified in the story of Abélard, the great philosopher, living in wet and wretchedness, without books, without raiment, without mental or physical comforts, in a mud cabin by the river. But he was not false to me, and immediately she was in the midst of a great joy, saying to herself: it were better to hear of him in a mud cabin with one disciple than lute-playing amid

green swards under trees. Her great pain had stopped suddenly, for now she knew that he had not abandoned her, and full of the thought of the love that he still retained for her, she began to dream of seeking him in his hermitage. The Prioress may be persuaded, she said. But no; for me to seek him in his hermitage might imperil all. But is there anything, she asked dolefully, her joy changing swiftly to grief—is there anything left to imperil? There may be something of the woman he loved still left in me, but if he delays much longer in the desert he will find but a shadow of me, and I shall be ashamed. The door of the library opened. A lay sister, she thought, going round the convent in search of a nun who is wanted in the parlour. Sister Héloïse, may I speak to you? Of course you may, Sister Paula, and laying her thoughts aside she welcomed the nun whose baby had scandalised the convent some years ago. Paula's eyes are like a balm, and her mouth, natural as a rose, soothes me, Héloïse said to herself; and she is not a day older than she was on the day when the mothers met to consider her expulsion.

As she was thinking what the sister's errand might be, Paula came across the room, her round, childish eyes amazed; Sister Paula always entered the library amazed at the sight of so much learning. Have you read all these books, Sister? Well, not all, Héloïse answered, with a smile. But you are always in the library, and when you go out to walk in the orchard you often have a book in your hand; and I have seen you sitting on the bench at the end of the broad walk reading instead of watching the coming and going of the ships. I have often wished to speak to you, for you were here, Sister, a monitress in the convent when—— You haven't forgotten the scandal when my baby was born? You didn't come to see my baby. But some of the nuns did. Your baby, Sister Paula, was out at nurse at Argenteuil, and I was



not a sister but a monitress, Héloïse replied. Was that the reason that kept you away—because you were a monitress? It was one of the reasons, Héloïse answered, but if I remember myself rightly, I was at that time a somewhat learned girl, who thought that books were the whole of human life. You haven't changed much, Sister Héloïse. I haven't ceased to value books, Héloïse answered, but I understand their place in life better than I did.

Of course you were always very learned, Paula continued, and we were all a little afraid of you; but we liked you and were glad to have you back with us. But we never thought that you'd come back, and we thought still less that you would marry, and if anybody had spoken of our monitress having a baby, we should have thought—— Well, I don't know what we wouldn't have thought; we would have looked upon whoever had spoken as one out of her mind. You were always a puzzle to us, for religion didn't seem to have the hold upon you that it had on the others—my sister Catherine came into the convent for the love of God. You were more like me; religion is but a part of my life, and that is why the Prioress and the mothers seemed to me to blame the birth of my baby without enough reason. What do you think, Sister Héloïse? In the end we all come to think as you do, Sister Paula, that life cannot be halved or quartered; we must look upon life as a whole. Now I am beginning to see, Sister Héloïse, that you have changed, and for the better. A baby brings a great change into a woman's life; I think every woman is better for having a baby, even a nun, but you mustn't say that I said it, for I am still under a cloud, you know. But you are a married woman, Sister—— I wasn't married when my baby was born, Héloïse interrupted. Whoever would have thought it! said Sister Paula, and the little nun sat, her round blue eyes fixed in astonished

gaze. So the learned Héloïse cannot mind herself any more than a poor little mite like me. But he married you, which makes it all the harder to understand why you should have come here, leaving your husband, the great Pierre Abélard, who, it is said, puts to shame Plato and Aristotle. And you aren't a woman that a man would leave in a hurry.

A sad little smile gathered in Héloïse's eyes, and she answered: it seems to me that the call to leave the world for the religious life was a mutual one. The world needs Pierre Abélard, and the work God chose him to do can be better done by a celibate. I don't think, said Paula, that I could have put aside my husband, if I had had one, for the sake of the world. Why not, Sister Paula? Do we not all owe something to the world and to God? Well, I don't think, Paula answered, breaking a little pause, that I should have had the hardihood to throw my luck into the water to swim ashore as best it could, to drown if it couldn't, like the poor dog that the sailors threw out of one of the boats going up and down the Seine last week; we saw him whirled and whirled about in the current and sucked down. But you know best, Sister Héloïse, only I couldn't have done it. We do not know what we could have done, Héloïse said, until the task is set before us. Jesus Christ was deeply troubled in the garden of Gethsemane; he asked that the chalice should pass from him. But, Sister Héloïse, you are not Jesus Christ. The simplicity of Paula's reply took Héloïse aback, and it was some little while before she could collect herself sufficiently to murmur: we must try to follow in his footsteps, however slowly. Now you are talking like Catherine, Paula said. And you do not like me when I talk like Sister Catherine? Not as well as when you talk out of yourself, Paula replied. Your sister's mind counted for a good deal in your life, no doubt, Héloïse replied, but Paula's thoughts were far

away ; and then, speaking suddenly, she said : neither of us knew anything of the world, Catherine even less than I did ; we just crossed over from the village to the convent and back from the convent to the village. But you don't know the village, do you, Sister Héloïse ? Well, there isn't much to see in Argenteuil. You've been to Paris, you've been up the Loire and away in Nantes ; you've been married ; you've read all these books ; your lot was all that can befall a woman. But I have had nothing, or so very little ! to follow my sister into a convent and to have a baby. If father were to hear of my baby ! But how could he have failed to hear of your baby ? Is he not of the village ?

Our house was at the farther end of the village, standing a little apart, and a very pretty house it was. All kinds and sorts of noble folk were often before our door. My father was a lutanist, as you know ; but perhaps you don't know that some of the best lutes in France were made in our workshop : viols, vielles, gitterns, citherns—all the stringed instruments. We often had orders from some of the Paris houses for lutes. Our customers were many great counts and viscounts, barons and marquises. The Comte de Rodebœuf had many a lute from my father, and I have seen Jean Guiscard in our workshop talking with father. All the lutes and citherns in the convent were made by father, and that is why, perhaps, I never had any taste for reading, and am never happy unless I am singing to a lute or playing the viol or gittern. I often envied you your music, Sister Paula, for music releases us from sad memories better than books. But it was your choice to come here, Paula answered. Was it not yours, Sister Paula ? We came here for learning just as you did, Paula replied, and when I was sixteen and Catherine eighteen we left the convent, for father and mother did not wish us to be separated. It was pleasant at first to get away from the ringing of the bell announcing

the different lessons, calling us to chapel and to the refectory. We liked the garden, planting vegetables in the spring and gathering fruits in the summer and autumn; we liked to creep into the workshop and to meet father in his leathern apron examining a lute that had come to be mended, to hang round our workman again, to talk about strings and stops, and of all to watch the barons and the counts and the marquises ride up to our gate asking to see father. But after a year or two we began to feel that we had no part in the spectacle. The barons and the counts took no notice of us: they might have if it hadn't been for mother, who shut us away, leaving us to peep through the top windows. An armourer and his wife were the only ones that came to see us, for in the county around there were but hovels and castles. Every morning a bell rang calling the lord's serfs to work, and the lutanist and the armourer were like stranded ships, high and dry; the nobility above us and the tradespeople of Argenteuil below us. So it may have been our loneliness that decided Catherine to return to the convent, or it may have been—— She stopped suddenly, and Héloïse sat watching the nun's blank face, guessing her thoughts to be far away, reliving an incident. Of what are you thinking, Sister? she said at last. Paula started out of her dream. Of what am I thinking, Sister? she asked. Of what good to tell a sad story? Sometimes it relieves the mind, Héloïse answered, and then, forgetful of Héloïse, almost as if she were talking to herself, Paula said: it often seems to me that a disappointment in love was a partial motive in determining Catherine's vocation. But I am not sure; Catherine could not tell herself; not now.

All the same a young man given over altogether to the art of lute-playing and singing, at whose castle many festivals were held and who was reputed to be in love with a lady of his own class, came to our house with a lute to



be mended, and while talking to father he stopped suddenly, saying: I hear singing in the room above us. My daughters are singing, father answered, and the Baron, for he was one, and a great power in the country, said: I can hear but indistinctly, missing many notes. Whereupon my father called to us to come down; he bade us sing to the stranger, who pronounced himself pleased with our singing, and said he would send for the lute; but instead of sending he came himself to fetch it. May I not sing a song or two with your daughters? he asked, and my father, being much flattered, begged him to come through the shop into that part of the house in which we lived. My thoughts always go back to that first evening. The evenings that followed it are not so clear to me; but all that summer-time was pleasant, trying to please the Baron and he trying to please us. Almost every evening, two or three times a week, he rode over from his castle. Mother shook her head, saying, in answer to father, that though it might be that my sister and I were no more to him than two voices, it was by no means sure that a preference would not begin to appear. Moreover, there are the girls themselves to consider. We began to hate mother. It was in the summer-time, and the evenings went by in our orchard singing, our visitor walking between us, accompanying us, the moon looking down through the branches. Mother often sent father to bid us to the house, the pretext being cake and wine. I hated her for it, but Catherine—— I don't know what she thought, she kept her thoughts to herself; we feared confidences, for we were both thinking of him; and if we spoke of him it was in the presence of our father and mother rather than when we were alone, each keeping her secret, neither trusting the other. A week rarely passed without our seeing him; it was in November that he did not call or send a message, and we were all agog. At last the news came that he had married a lady for her

money, one of his own class, and we knew we should see no more of him. It was then that Catherine spoke of entering the religious life, and it was with her going that trouble and loneliness came into my life, for I don't know that I was in love with the Baron, and Catherine kept writing that she was offering up prayers that I might join her in her happiness, the only true happiness, and I began to think that now the Baron was gone there was nothing else for me to do but to follow her example. So I often fell down upon my knees before my bed and prayed that somebody else might come, for I dreaded the convent. But nobody came, only the winter, which is always hard to bear; and the winter that followed the Baron's departure was lonelier than the winter that preceded his coming: cold and wet, with storms of wind, and afterwards the snowfall, and there seemed to be nothing but silence, with great falls of snow. Father and mother were always talking of the sunset of their lives, saying that not many more years of life lay in front of them, and that they would die happy if they knew what would become of me when they were gone. At last I summoned all my courage and said: but father, mother, if I were to follow Catherine's example and enter the convent, what would become of you? You would be alone. No answer came from them, but I could see that there was something in their minds; and at last, in reply to repeated questions, they confessed the truth to me, that if I made up my mind to enter the convent, they too would separate, one going to a monastery, the other to a convent. And we all three sat looking at each other, unable to speak.

Mother died with the melting of the snow and I was alone with father, who, I could see, couldn't forget his soul for five minutes together. His lips would begin to move and he'd lay the half-finished lute aside, and he as good as told me that if I entered the convent he would leave his money to Argenteuil and Saint-Denis, getting many

Masses for the repose of his soul. It was lonelier than being in the house by oneself, for he walked about like one in a dream, and when we met he started, as if at the sight of a stranger, as if he had forgotten me, and I'd answer: wake up, father, hast forgotten me? And then he would smile and become himself again; but only for a little while, and the estrangement continued, getting worse day by day, till we were apart, even when we were together, for he was thinking all the time of the prayers that awaited him in the room overhead. Everything else was forgotten, and of all the workshop; those who gave him lutes to repair went away with their broken instruments to be mended in Paris. He has come to hate the house, I said, for it is part of the life of the world, and so am I, and if I stay here much longer he will begin to look upon me as the barrier between himself and his monastery. So in despair I fell once more to praying that another baron might come and marry me. Every night I prayed, but none came; and one night father and I were alone in the house together, father in the room above, I in the room below, and I could hear him singing psalms, praying and striking his breast. It was then that I gave way. I had borne all I could, and knowing that I couldn't resist father any longer, and that the convent waited half-a-mile down the road, the river came into my mind, and I bethought myself that I might run thither, not to drown myself but to buy or beg a passage in one of the ships plying between Paris and Havre. You know they anchor at night by the shore, and my idea was to stand on the bank screaming till somebody on board awoke; maybe the captain, I said, who will take a bribe, or a sailor; and with no other thought in my mind but to escape from everything I had ever seen or heard, I ran on till I reached Stephen's house, and there I was stopped by the sight of the priest reading by the window, the lamp at his elbow. Father, I said to myself, will not miss me



for a long while, but he will miss me sooner or later and it is wicked to go away without leaving a message; and with whom can I leave it if not with our priest? Something laid hold of me. It is said that a guardian angel is always on one side of us and an evil angel on the other, the good angel trying to overpower the bad, the bad trying to overpower the good. It must have been like that with me then, or something like that, for I couldn't pass the house. My good angel must have got the better of the bad angel at that moment, giving him a fall, and before the bad angel could rise again I had knocked at the priest's door, which was opened to me by the old woman, his housekeeper, who said: it is late to see his reverence; his reverence is tired. But I couldn't go without leaving my message, and after a while she said: I'll ask his reverence if he will see you. Come this way, he said, and took me into his room, and I told him what my life was, and that I hoped in a few hours to be far away. I remember all I said and the stillness of the room, with the priest listening and speaking not a word. Now I must go, I said. It is my duty to warn you, he answered, that when your father hears that you have gone away for ever to live with sailors—— That it will kill him, I cried; well then, there is no escape for me, I must enter the convent. But you do not know, my dear child, he answered me, what the life on board those ships is, and the violence that the sailors offer to women. Life in which there is nothing is worse, I said. You must return home, my dear child, to-night. And then, feeling that my project had come to naught, I fell to weeping, my head thrown across the priest's table. How I wept! My sobs were so loud that he must have thought my heart would break, for he called in his old housekeeper, who took me in her arms, but I shook her off. Stephen begged of me to be calm, but I cried: leave me, leave me. Tears there were everywhere, on the priest's books, on his table, on the floor. I must have



wept a great deal, and there was reason for my weeping, for never was anybody unhappier than I was in the half-hour I spent in the priest's house. In the garden was a syringa, and whenever the night sighed the thick, sickly perfume came into the room, and I think it was because I could not bear the cloying scent any longer that I escaped from him. But Stephen followed me, and when we were in the road, he said: you have come to me to-night and it is my duty to protect you from yourself. I will not warn your father of your project, but to-night you must return home, for you are acting on impulse; if to-morrow night you wish to leave everything you can do so, but not to-night; to-night I am responsible for you. My strength was gone and I could not dash away from him.

Father was still praying when I entered the house, but it didn't matter; I was exhausted. But the next night? Héloïse asked. Next night Stephen came to see us; he came the night after and every night till he persuaded me to become a nun, and here I am, a Benedictine nun with a baby. But the father of your baby, Héloïse asked, do you see him? Do not ask me to tell you my secret: it is the only thing that remains to me, the only thing really my own—that and baby. And then, misinterpreting the change that came into Héloïse's face, she said: but you're not angry? You'll allow me to keep my secret? Did you come to the library to tell me your story? Héloïse asked. I hadn't thought of telling my story to anybody, Paula answered; I came to talk about my baby, but it seems to me that I have talked only of myself. If you care to see my little girl, the Prioress will give you leave to come with me to Argenteuil. Yes; there was something else I had to say to you. Why don't you send for your baby? Ask the Prioress's leave. The convent would be less dreary with a little fellow running about. Mine is but a nun's sin, and she can't come hither, though

I begged and prayed the Prioress, if it was only once a week or once a month. But she wouldn't hear of it, my baby is a scandal, so it would seem. But why? for a baby is such a natural thing. We have talked of all this already, and I have kept you from your book. Now I must run away.

The door closed softly, and Héloïse sat thinking of Paula, who seemed to her like a flower long shut in a book which still retains some of its colour and perfume; and then her thoughts turned to Astrolabe, a child of three, for whom she would have to wait three or four years, for so young a child could not bear the long journey. Not till he was six would it be safe to send for him. For three long years she would have to wait, and all that time perhaps without news of Abélard. For none came to the convent, and the rare letters that reached her contained no mention of him, and she asked herself wildly if Denise thought that because she was a nun she ceased to be a wife and a mother. Six months passed without a letter and then a letter came, bringing news of Astrolabe, she said, and on turning the page her eyes caught sight of her child's name, brightening her face, but only for a moment, for the news that the letter brought her was that the child was ailing and that they had sent him to the sea with Madelon, to her own country. Where French is not spoken, Héloïse said; so the child that Madelon will bring me sooner or later will come to me without French or Latin. On reading a little further she learnt that the child had recovered his health, which was good news; and she took heart, for a child forgets a language as easily as he learns it, and nearly persuaded herself that she did not care to have him back till he had learnt French, for a child with only Breton on his lips would not be her child; nor would he be Abélard's, who knew no word of that language. It would be hard to be without him for three years, and harder still to be without news of

Abélard. It seemed to her that she could bear with the absence of one but not of both, and she often asked herself if she were given her choice which she would choose. Abélard, her heart cried, comes first, but she loved her baby boy, who was not only hers but Abélard's; and when he returned to her she would begin to teach him French and Latin. But out of what book would she teach him French? Out of his father's songs? But there is very little of the language in a song, and Astrolabe would ask her to tell him stories, saying: Madelon used to tell me beautiful stories of giants and wizards, and of Peronnik, the village fool, who was not such a fool as he seemed to be, for he overcame the enchantress in her castle and released all the prisoners she kept under lock and key in the castle dungeons. The story had almost passed out of her mind, but she might recall it. . . . Already it was coming back to her, and the task of writing it would be a pleasant one if she could only remember how Peronnik met the enchantress. But all she could think of was that she used to ride by on a black horse followed by a foal, and not being able to fashion a story out of this material, she bethought herself of a white knight riding through a village perishing for want of rain from a drought brought about by the golden bowl and diamond spear having fallen into the power of the enchantress. The enchantress might send one of the knights she had enslaved to waylay the knight in quest of the Grail—a cripple, Héloïse said to herself, and her arm was stretched across the table for a pen. With rhymes and notes to help it the common language was delightful, but without them French seemed so strange, so incongruous in prose, that she would not have dared to continue the story in it if it had not been that she must have something in French out of which Astrolabe could learn his native language. As Astrolabe did not speak French he might as well begin his lessons in French as in Latin. But it is not easy to write in a language that

one has never seen written. And there were other difficulties; the Latin construction was always getting in her way, and very often she lacked courage to write a sentence as she would speak it. Living speech seemed to her so barbarous that perforce she must juggle with it; it was not amenable to grammatical forms. But it is meant only for a child, she said.

After writing a few pages she began to enjoy the prattle, for it is no more, she said, excusing herself to herself. My boy shall read of *Æneas* in Latin, and of *Peronnik* the Fool in French, in the language that the Breton lad learnt in the French village, for *Peronnik* was a Breton. Or was it that *Peronnik* was a backward child who learnt no language from his mother, of whom he remembered nothing, and knew not whence he came?

#### CHAP. XXXIV.

THE wet summer of 1127 was followed by an autumn of sunny airiness, blue skies, with white clouds unfolding, the afternoons passing into glowing evenings and the evenings into soft, still nights, the like of which *Cherriez*, the convent gardener, couldn't discover in his memories. And the decline of the year was as lovely on earth as in the skies, the slender leaves of the willows falling unobtrusively through the branches into the current, the crumpled leaves of the crisped orchard, reft of its fruit a month ago, falling now and then with a little crinkly sound, the robin singing the dirge of the year from the hedge's highest spray all the long day through, till the rooks came wheeling home to the dishevelled elms showing last year's nests. And while watching the starlings in the fields over which the swallows had circled during the wet days gone by, *Héloïse* told the sisters who walked beside her of the bird she had freed from lice in the *rue des Chantres*, at which they all wondered, till the starlings



went away with a whirl of wings, unable to bear any longer the gaze of human eyes. The nuns resumed their walk in thoughts of the mysterious summer-time, come, it seemed to them, from beyond the skies, a miracle vouchsafed by God, since Cherriez could not explain it. Even the chill that a few evenings later caused them to draw their habits about them as they came up from the river did not shrink their belief that they might escape the winter, nor did the cold night and the colder morning, that brought the nuns forth from their cells shivering in the dark to pray, for the Angelus bell was ringing. After the prayer, Sister Agatha said: fog and frost, what a change from yesterday; and when the nuns looked out of their doorways the ghostly landscape turned their thoughts eastward, and it was in every mind that Jerusalem had fallen into the hands of the Saracen. Somebody avouched it. But a few hours later their belief in the Infidel's triumph was dispelled by the top branches of the elms showing above the mist, glowing in the light of a pallid, rose-coloured sun, full of promise of a fine day. And certain, then, that the Sepulchre was still safe in Christian hands, the nuns set themselves to the enjoyment of the sunshine, which lasted for many days more, for nearly two weeks, till a storm began at midnight, clattering so loudly among the roofs that the nuns quaked in their beds, thinking perhaps that God was preparing the world's end. The leaves rustling in the panes seemed to them angels bidding them awake for judgment, and when Agatha opened the door she bade the sisters behold a heap of dried leaves in the porch. Leaves must fall, said Sister Tetta, but the storm cannot have failed to bring down some trees. Even if we do lose a tree or two, Sister Angela answered, we shall have more firewood, for after so much fine weather the winter is sure to be severe. Do not say that, cried Sister Tetta, lest you bring to pass what you fear; none suffers from cold as I do.

Cherriez will be able to tell us, Sister Angela answered, if a fine autumn precedes a cold winter. The bell for Mass began to ring, and Sext and None seemed longer that morning than they had ever seemed before. But all things end, the nuns said, as they escaped from chapel and ran for their cloaks, eager to enquire out the havoc the storm had wrought.

Only two trees had crashed, and some branches, and among these Cherriez was busy with adze and saw. At that moment a great gust fell upon the nuns, whirling their habits round their legs, and carrying the feathery seeds of the traveller's joy from the wall up into the air like pale smoke. The gust gone by is naught to them that be coming, said Cherriez, and when they have blown themselves out it will be the while of the frost. We shall be walking on the river before Christmas. No, ladies, it isn't the black side that I see, but the white, the old man cried after the affrighted nuns. If Cherriez speaks the truth let us pray that God may send us another storm, said Angela. And next year, when there are no more trees? asked Tetta. None answered her, for it was in everybody's mind that next year must look after itself; and with the news that two trees were down and many great branches, the nuns returned to the convent in the hope that Mother Ysabeau, in view of the wood the storm had provided, would allow them a fire in the community-room. But we are still in November, she answered, and our provision of firewood is scantier this year than last. No fire till December! cried Sister Angela. Nowhere but in the kitchen and in the Prioress's room, Mother Ysabeau replied, and all checked the words on the ends of their tongues: the Prioress conceals a box of live charcoal in her muff.

I'd like to hear what you thought of the cold in Brittany; it's twice as cold by the sea as it is here, cried Astrolabe. But you nuns roll yourselves up in your

warm habits, like hedgehogs under leaves in a ditch; no wonder you feel cold when you come out. But I am never cold. I could run down to the river naked and come back leaping and bounding about you. Astrolabe, I forbid thee to undress thyself, and a little more strictness in thy speech would become thee. But, mother, all the sisters wear heavier stuffs than I. Thy clothes, mother, are thicker, warmer than mine: feel. Hush, hush, Héloïse replied, for thy bad French wounds our ears. But, mother, three months ago I had but Breton and thou couldst not understand me, and now we are talking together easily—— Hush, hush, said Héloïse, and all the nuns laughed and were pleased to see Héloïse's pretty, small-featured son, eager and blithe as a blackbird, lean across the table, minded to question his mother or anybody who would listen to him, his eagerness, however, checked by a slight stutter. They vied with each other as to who should spoil him the most, and every nun, old and young, liked to kiss his sunny face. But he liked kisses so little that, after his promise to kiss Sister Angela if she ran a race with him round the cloister, he only offered her his cheek, and when she kissed him according to her taste, he cried: Sister Angela, I do not like wet kisses, nor kisses at all, but the wet ones least. Astrolabe, thou'rt rude, uncouth, Héloïse said, for all the nuns have been kind to thee, Sister Angela more than any other. Yes, mother, but my promise was not for a wet kiss—— We have heard enough, his mother answered, and the thought came to her that Astrolabe must beg Sister Angela's pardon; but on second thoughts it seemed to her that if she said nothing the child's aversion for Angela's kisses would be forgotten more easily.

It was some six weeks after this quarrel with Sister Angela, at the end of a snowy afternoon, that Astrolabe began to beg the nuns to chase him round the convent, saying that if they caught him they might eat him as



hounds eat a fox. But you won't eat me, for I am as cunning as the fox and will lead you a scamper till you're worn out. Astrolabe, Astrolabe, Héloïse cried, and then, turning to the trembling sisters, she said : if there was a fire on the hearth I would read you the story that I wrote for my son to learn French out of. Oh, mother, let us have a fire. It isn't for thee to ask for a fire, Astrolabe, for thou'rt never cold. He says he is never cold, but I know better than that, said Madelon, and she began to relate her journey from Brittany, but was cut short by Sister Angela. We'll hear that journey another time ; we are now thinking of a fire, or praying to Mother Ysabeau for one. Wood is very scarce, said Mother Ysabeau. But we are now in January, cried many voices ; snow is falling and we are so cold that we couldn't listen to the story that Sister Héloïse has written without some logs. Well, well, said Mother Ysabeau, and without waiting for more the nuns, with Astrolabe at their head, ran for light wood ; and before the logs were burnt through many were asking Héloïse to read, but she said : as soon as the fire has begun to warm the room ; it is still as cold as before, and you'd be thinking of your toes all the time.

More and more logs were required, and when Héloïse had finished reading the story out of which every morning Astrolabe learnt his lesson, Mother Hilda said : speak to us, Astrolabe, of thy mother's story, so that we may see if it be plain to thee. It is all plain enough, he answered, but it isn't the story they tell in Brittany, not altogether ; some things are the same, but not all. And which story dost thou like the better, thy mother's or Madelon's ? Mother Hilda asked him. But he kept silence, and something like a scowl came into his face, and remained in it till his mother began to chide him for not answering Mother Hilda. Which story is to thy liking, darling ? There are things that are good in each story, so I'd have mother put the two together. And when Mother Hilda



asked him what there was in his mother's story that he'd have put into Madelon's, he answered : a blasted tree, without leaves, and all the branches gone but one, a perch for the ravens who come to talk to each other. That's how it is in Madelon's story, and Peronnik, having a raven at home, thought the ravens in the blasted oak must be tame ravens. So what do you think he did ? He climbed up within earshot of the birds, and what they were saying was : look here, look there, look up, look down, look everywhere. They are talking to me, said Peronnik, and he looked into the tree, which was hollow, only a shell, and not one of you would ever guess what he saw in that hollow tree.

Astrolabe would not continue his story till all the nuns had tried to guess what he saw, some saying gold, some saying great treasure, some bethought themselves of the golden bowl and the diamond spear. But Astrolabe shook his head at all the answers. At last a sister said : a sword, to which Astrolabe answered : yes, he found a sword in the tree, but something else ; guess again. But the nuns could think of naught likely, and to soothe the child they said books and candlesticks and crowns and sceptres ; all bad guesses, he said, and when certain that his knowledge was greater than that of all present, he said : Peronnik saw a knight's helmet, and where there is a helmet, he said, there may be a head and maybe a body beneath the head ; so I must be about my business, for there is a secret door in that tree and the knight will come out of it and have my life. And so afraid was he of the knight that he didn't return to the tree for long whiles, thinking all the time of what he had seen, for he couldn't, though he tried ever so hard, take his mind off the knight. At last he had to have another peep. The knight was still there, and he was about to make off when the ravens came, crying : look here, look there, look everywhere. He was too frightened, for ravens are evil birds. But if

the knight be dead, he said to himself, what have I to fear? And one day he came with an adze and cut away the bark, and what do you think was there? A whole suit of armour with nothing but bones in it.

O, what a dreadful tale thou'rt telling us, cried the nuns. We shall not sleep to-night, said Sister Tetta. But the others wished to hear what Peronnik had done with the suit of armour. Why, of course, you sillies, what else could he do with it but put it on? The armour was all silver, for it was in this silver armour, said the prophecy, that the wizard—— In mother's story it is a wizardess, who had many knights imprisoned in her castle; every one of these had gone forward to destroy her, but she beguiled them to ride round the castle ramparts, promising to wed him who could do it. Did Peronnik do this? Héloïse asked. He did, the child answered. And what befell him afterwards? Mother Hilda asked. When he returned to the hall, leading his horse by the bridle, why, the wizardess knew that her power was broken. Am I telling the story right, mother? Quite right. But you forgot to tell—— I know, mother, I forgot to tell that while Peronnik was jumping from battlement to battlement the wizardess was looking into the burnished silver shield that her pander, a crippled knight, upheld for her to see the parapet chase. He took jump after jump, and when he rode his horse down a great flight of steps and came to her, she gave one great shriek and vanished into smoke, leaving her keys behind her for Peronnik to unlock the dungeon in which she had shut her prisoners; which done, all the prisoners came out and sang a hymn together, and with Peronnik at their head they marched away to win the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracen. Bravo, little man, said Mother Hilda, thou hast told the story as well as thy mother did. But might not the two stories be put into one? Astrolabe asked. I like Madelon's story, for in it are the blasted tree, the

ravens, and the suit of armour, and a wizard ; I do not care for mother's wizardess ; for I don't think a woman would have a castle and keep prisoners in vaults. The knights wouldn't listen to her ; knights are not such fools. In Madelon's story the wizardess is a wizard, a man with a fierce black beard, by name Rogéar. And a man with a beard is more to thy taste, said Mother Hilda, than a wizardess ? A man should have a beard always, for without one he would be the same as a woman, wouldn't he ? Before Mother Hilda could answer, the door was opened and the portress ran through it crying : there's an old man begging at our gate for shelter, Mother Prioress. He is numb with the cold and weary almost to death in his limbs, for the wolves are after him ; such is his story and 'tis easy to believe him, for I have heard the devils howling down by Cherriez's hovel. What say you, Sisters ? Many voices spoke of the Prioress. But, said the lay sister, the wolves are after him, and in a few minutes will take him by our gate if it be not opened to him. Then open to him and we'll seek the Prioress, cried the many voices, and the talk fell on the age of the man and the peril he stood in by their gate and how he could be saved by their mercy. May I go to see the wolves through the grating, mother ? If it pleases thee, Héloïse replied. But, Sister Agatha, away with thee, for while we talk the wolves may be quarrelling over bones. Away they all went at a scamper, and a few minutes afterwards an old stooped and grizzled man, with a musical instrument tied on his back, tottered into the room, the nuns making room for him by the fire. Thou'rt so cold, gleeman, that thou canst barely move thy fingers, said the Prioress, and the old man lifted his eyes to her and mumbled : yes, indeed, so frozen that I can hardly move my fingers. But you shall have some music when my fingers are loosened.

Some more logs were thrown on to the hearth and a great blaze was soon flaring, for which the gleeman thanked



the sisters, saying: it will be some time yet—— But we're not thinking of thy music, good man; warm thyself, Héloïse answered, and the sisters drew together, for the smell of the thawing man was not sweet, saying: we cannot turn him out to the wolves when he is warm; he must sleep somewhere. He must indeed, but not by the fire in the community-room, said one. He will be cold in the wood shed, said another. Not so cold, Mother Hilda interrupted, if we can give him some rugs, and meanwhile some warm milk will help him to recover himself. You're in luck, ladies, to have cows giving milk, and I hope that the door of the byre is a stout one, for the wolves are in plenty in these parts and will be scratching and gnawing at the planks every night; and should they find a loose one they will have it out, and if there isn't a loose one they will be striving to dig a hole under the planks. But the ground is too hard for digging, so there's no fear that way. But see to your planks every morning, or when you come with your pails only some scattered hoofs and horns you'll find. Drink, gleeman, said Héloïse, handing him the cup. And may a high place in heaven reward you, lady, the vagrant answered, as he handed back the empty cup to her and stretched his legs anew to the fire.

The icicles with which he was covered began to drip; they were in his hair and beard, in the tattered hose that covered his legs, and the eyes of the nuns followed the rents and the patches in the old green cloak, green-worn with age and weather, that he wore from his chin to his knees, his only garment, maybe, else he would have thrown it away so that he might run faster across the fields from the wolves. And as if guessing the thoughts that the nuns were thinking, he said: if it hadn't been for Cherriez's ass, that had wandered from his stable, foolish fellow, I should be picked clean by now. Thou hast in mind a clean-picked ass, said Sister Angela. That was in my mind, indeed, the vagrant answered, for the wolves



were at my heels when the ass crossed my slot; but one ass among twenty hungry wolves would be but a mouthful apiece. The tearing and the quarrelling over him gave me time to run across the fields, and lest, ladies, you think that I am lying to you, come with me and you'll find that my scent has brought the wolves to your gate, still licking their lips in memory of the ass. May I not put my eyes to the grating to see the wolves licking their chops, mother? cried Astrolabe. But what wouldst thou see in a wolf, my son? Héloïse asked. Why, a wolf, mother, what else? Whereat the nuns laughed, and the Prioress said: let him not be disappointed. Since then, Astrolabe, the Prioress wishes thee to see a wolf, go fetch thy cloak and wrap thyself in it well, and I will take thee to the gate and lift thee up to the grating to see whatever there may be to be seen of the wolves.

And many of the nuns being as curious as the boy to see the pests, the Prioress cried after them: let the grating suffice; do not open the door to peep if the wolves that are in front of the grating be round the corner, for such would be playing with the danger which our visitor here will tell is a danger indeed to all who have not a high wall between them and the fields this night. Shall we see the wolves, mother, licking their chops? Before Héloïse could answer, a sniffing under the door told them that the wolves had not lost the scent of the gleeman, though a power of snow had fallen since the ass was eaten. Lift me up, mother. Yes, there they are; one, two, three, four, five, and two sniffing under the door; great hairy things with dashing tails and jaws filled with great white teeth. Could we not throw something at them, mother? Could we not do them some harm for having eaten Cherriez's ass? cried Astrolabe. But they were hungry, Héloïse said. But should one animal eat another animal if it

be hungry? The laws of wolves and the laws of men are not the same, my dear child, Sister Angela remarked sententiously. But aren't they? cried Astrolabe. Should we not eat all we could get to eat if we were starving? No, I do not think we should, Héloïse answered, and as Astrolabe still seemed doubtful, she said: you would not eat the old man who is warming himself by the fire inside? But the wolves would. Are you sure, mother? queried Astrolabe. Well, the old man thinks they would, and he doesn't feel called to put the wolves' appetite to the test. So come, let us go back to our fire, for it is cold here.

Our gleeman's fingers are thawed, said Astrolabe, for he is playing his instrument, whatever it may be, for the entertainment of Mother Prioress. Let us hurry to see him, and suiting the action to the word, Sister Angela and Astrolabe ran a race up the corridor. Well, did you see many wolves? the Prioress asked. Yes, there were seven, Mother Prioress, cried Astrolabe, waiting to chew the old man up. Be not so precise, Astrolabe, Héloïse said, waiting for the man here is enough. Mother Prioress, I wanted to drop a blazing torch or pour some boiling water on them for having eaten the ass that Cherriez said I should ride. You'll never ride that ass, gentle sir. He was gobbled long ago, and if I had not had legs enough to run across the field in front of them and to make one of you ladies hear my knocks when I did, you'd have found my bones on the threshold, with my organistrum beside me, a gift to me from the beautiful Comtesse D'Urgel. Denis raised his eyes, and looking through the half-closed lids he forebore, not certain yet if the story which was part of his wont to tell, for it raised himself in the consideration of donors, would be well received in the company in which he found himself. But as the hour wore by he was encouraged to speak of the giver of his organistrum, and he told

that his mother was a bakeress at the Comtesse D'Urgel's castle, and that when she drew the bread from the oven she threw the loaves into a basket, which it was his business to carry round the castle, distributing them as he went. Going up one stair and down another, the old man said, I sang my songs; and on coming near to the Comtesse's apartments I always remembered to sing my best songs, so it came to pass that she delayed me on my rounds, asking me to sing my songs over and over again to her; and there being many instruments of music in her rooms, she would give me them one after the other. My mother was but a bakeress, but the Comtesse said that my mother mattered naught, so beautifully did I follow her voice on the lute. Again Denis raised his lids a little, and judging the company to be favourable to his story, he continued to tempt them with it, saying: good ladies here, I durst not tell how I came to hope that a great lady like the Comtesse D'Urgel could love a bakeress's son, though he sang as the angels sing in heaven. My love for the Comtesse was far from mortal sin, far from that which is venial, yet not to divine love would I compare it, though all love that is not sinful is akin to divine love. . . . Who shall say? Not the same, of course, ladies, only a shadow of the love we hope to come into hereafter. Now lest I am not plain to you all I will go further and tell that though my mother baked the castle's bread and I was but the carrier thereof up and down turret stairs, the thought laid hold of me that I might send my songs to the Lady D'Urgel, which I did, till she said to me one day: some great *trouvère* loves me from afar, for songs in praise of my beauty reach me. And why, Lady D'Urgel, must it be some great *trouvère*? Who else would dare, and who else could fashion such melody? As she was about to sing to me my heart took fright, and I could

not do else than to beg the Lady D'Urgel's permission to finish my round, for with so many waiting for the daily bread, I said, I shall not be able to give my thought to the song. Deliver thy bread, boy, she said, and return to me with thine empty basket. At which my heart was so uplifted that I began to sing one of the songs I had sent the Comtesse, as I crossed the courtyard, stopping singing suddenly with a great fear in my heart lest I had betrayed myself. But the mischief was done; the Comtesse's window was open: she had heard me.

He was about to continue his story, but before doing so his watchful eyes, accustomed to spy peril everywhere, went round the company, resting longer on the Prioress's face than on any other, and meeting nowhere a frown but only eagerness to hear him, he said: ladies, I will tell you all that my rival in this, my first and last love, was the great Comte de Montfort, and when he returned with his gleeman to the castle, Catherine, Countess D'Urgel, thinking no harm, showed him one of the songs she had received from the bakeress's son, a minstrel by the grace of God discovered to her by his singing of this very song as he crossed the yard. She would have had the Comte make me one of his retinue, but the Comte could not believe in the purity of his lady, and I was driven out, and being but a boy did not know how to seek service as gleeman, and so enlisted myself in the holy army for Palestine, where I fought the Infidel for three years. I was at the siege of Antioch, ladies, and afterwards at that of Jerusalem, but found no recompense for bravery when I returned to France for the infidels I had slain. But perhaps you ladies are weary of my story, for this is no story that such as you should listen to. I have heard nothing unworthy in thy story, Denis, said the Prioress, but much to thy credit, and we pray thee to proceed into it.

And the gleeman, thus encouraged, continued a little



while longer, telling that he met in his wanderings another lady whose praises he sang for a year or more. But at the end of the year a whispering came into his heart. Denis, thou'rt losing the love of thy immortal soul for the love of a mortal woman; better that thou should'st return to the Holy Land, was what the voice said to me. I am not learned, ladies, in words, but in songs, and now I have told you all or nearly all. But didst return to the Holy Land a second time? the Prioress asked. I did, troth and faith, and when I returned from the Holy Land, weary and ill from wounds and feeble, I again found no recompense, and so I have wandered on, singing by waysides and in castle yards till I reached your door. But, said Héloïse, the instrument that thou playest so beautifully was given to thee by her? By the Comtesse D'Urgel. Look at it, I pray you, ladies. Did it accompany thee to the Holy Land? Héloïse answered. No, he answered; I had to separate myself from my beautiful organistrum, and that was the heartbreak of it all. I left it in trust with a friend, who sold it in my absence, and by some strange chance it found its way back into the hands of the Comtesse D'Urgel, to whom I went on my return, and she said that I had been accused of selling the instrument, and that she had kept it, for she knew that I could not sell that which came to me from her own hands. It was given to me again with these words: Denis, what I have given I have given, and would keep thee here for my gleeman, for I shall always remember the songs that I received from thee. But I may not. Her very words, ladies. So with some pieces of money I was sent away again, and have since roamed with varying fortune, mostly ill fortune, for no fault of my own, ladies here, I beg you to believe. And full sure that the ladies were beguiled by him, he ran his fingers over the strings, saying: I could have arrived at your gate a few minutes sooner if I had dropped my organistrum in the field, but

of what good would my life be to me if I were to lose what a gracious lady had given me in my boyhood—a memory and a consolation to me in all my misfortunes?

I am safe in this convent for a week, he said to himself, and out of the joyousness of his heart he began to sing one of the songs that he may or may not have written for the Comtesse D'Urgel. I would like to learn that song, Astrolabe said; wilt thou teach it to me? And may I look to see how the instrument is played? Why not, indeed? and he put forward into the child's hands an instrument more than twice the size of the ordinary lute, with keys. You will heed that the keys are placed on the neck, Denis said, and are raised a little to touch the strings by means of handles at the side of the neck. The strings go over this bridge just as in a common lute. But the other bridge is a wheel, which is turned by a handle at the end of the instrument, making the strings vibrate. One of us turns the wheel, the other manages the keys. How wilt thou play to us if I do not turn the wheel for thee? Astrolabe asked. I can turn the wheel and manage the keys myself, the gleeman answered, and I will show you how the wheel is to be turned, which he did, the nuns marvelling at the interest that the child showed. All else but what he was learning at the moment was forgotten, and when the wheel was understood by him the gleeman began to make plain to him the secret of the keys, and the first lesson in the playing of the organistrum was not over when Astrolabe said: may I have it on my knees, for I think I would like to see if I can play it? But what wilt thou play, darling? Héloïse asked. The song that I learnt from thee yesternorning, mother; father's song. May I not play it, mother? Yes, if Denis will let thee have his instrument. And the nuns crowded round, some saying: thou wilt never be able to play an instrument with those keys and wheels and handles, Astrolabe. Let him try, said the old gleeman; I will

hold it upon his knee, for it is heavy and he might drop it.

Yes, indeed, the lad is a musician, the old gleeman said, for he was mazed at the boy's quickness, and if the lady of the house will let me bide here till the snow be off the ground and the bears and wolves have returned to their lairs and I am out of peril from them, I will teach him many a song; before I pass this way again he'll be delighting you all with his talent, which has come to him from his father, for didn't I hear the lady say the song he played so well was his father's? Lady of the house, you'll not turn me out to-morrow to the bears and the wolves, will you? the old man said. We will not turn thee out, the Prioress answered, till the country be safe for travelling, and Cherriez, our peasant, will be able to give thee a bed in his barn. I'd like better the wood shed, for them varmint's are still a-dallying round Cherriez's hut. Well, we'll see what can be done to-morrow, the Prioress replied; and the gleeman felt that it would be unwise to press his requests any further. And now belike you would hear the organistrum before bed-time; and all consenting he played to them for a little while, stopping suddenly to ask them to sing so that he might learn how their voices pitched. Ye have all pleasing voices here; pleasanter I have never heard, and some eight or nine might be picked for a short choir. The altos and the trebles are about equal, and if you ladies are not going to your rest we might practise a while together. The Prioress gave no answer, and her silence being taken to mean her permission, the gleeman began his teaching.

Now, said he, a very pleasant musical game can be played this way. We take a tune, and the altos begin it on the A, and the trebles continue it a fifth higher, and so on; the altos again come in a fifth higher and then the trebles, and so on, turn and turn about, until you have

come to the end of the tune. You all know *Vexilla Regis*? The nuns replied that they sang it in chapel. Then let us see if you can sing it in fifths, said Denis. We should have an instrument to give us the note; now, my young sir, will you be good enough to give us the A? Astrolabe turned red and was embarrassed, for he did not know the notes, and Denis had to come over and show him how to get it. We should all be in our beds, the Prioress said, but Christmas is a time for thanksgiving, and it does not seem to me that any harm is being done. But, mother, cried Astrolabe suddenly, may I not stay up a little longer, for there are many things I would like to ask Denis about the notes. My child, thou hast been out of thy bed since early morning and thine eyes are closing, Héloïse answered. Never mind, my little sir, Denis whispered, I will learn you all the notes to-morrow. My kind ladies, before you go may I ask for a rug to wrap myself in, my cloak being thin? Two rugs thou shalt have, for the wood shed is a cold bed-chamber. He may miss it, Mother Prioress; may I not show it to him? Astrolabe cried, and leave being given to him he ran after Denis, whispering to him: thou'lt teach me to play to-morrow? I will be down early; I will speak to the cook myself, and mother will.

Other promises were exchanged between them, all of which were fulfilled next day, and in return Astrolabe spent an hour with Denis over the keys and the wheel. But, said Denis, you must learn how to read music. To read, said Astrolabe; can it be read? And they were deep in the mystery of the written notes when Héloïse interrupted them. Mother, look what Denis is teaching me. But it will take weeks and months to learn all that Denis knows, mother. May not he be given leave to sleep in the wood shed every night till the snow melts, for the wolves are about all day? Do, mother, speak to the Prioress. I will speak to the Prioress, Héloïse



answered. From whom, lady, did he get his musical ear? Denis asked tactfully. From his father, Héloïse replied, and moved by the thought of Abélard's delight at finding his son proficient in music, she sought the Prioress, leaving Astrolabe to discover Denis's accomplishments, a thing he was quick to do, finding before his mother returned that Denis played many other instruments besides the organistrum, the lute, the violin, the pipe, the bagpipe, the syrinx, the harp, the gigue and the lively little gittern, the symphony, the psaltery, the regals and the tabor. But there is much else for a man to learn who would be a gleeman, said Denis, as soon as they were alone again. He must sing a song well and make tales and fables, throw knives into the air and catch them without cutting his fingers; he must balance chairs and walk on his hands. But, Denis, canst thou walk on thy hands? I could walk upon my hands, the old gleeman cried, when I was your age and long after it, but stiffness has come into the joints and I cannot pitch legs over head any more. Astrolabe asked him if he could teach him all the gleeman's craft, to walk on my hands, he said, and throw knives into the air and catch them? May I get thee some knives? Bring me the knives and I will catch them. I can catch apples on the points of the knives, he said. May I fetch some? cried Astrolabe, and returning with six, the old juggler was throwing knives and catching them and the apples that the child threw to him when Héloïse returned to the room, saying that she would not have knives thrown into the air and Astrolabe standing by. For if one were to fall upon thee! But none will fall, my lady; I have never missed a knife yet in my life. But Héloïse was not to be gainsaid. If thy father were to come here and find thee with a great scar upon thy cheek, or if a knife should fall into thine eye, what answer should I make? Denis, thou must promise me not to play any perilous tricks except at a safe distance. But, mother, may I not

go for walks with Denis? He knows how to set springs for birds. What birds would he snare? Héloïse asked, but instead of getting an answer to her question another request was put to her. May we go to the river, mother? But why to the river, Astrolabe? it is frozen. But that is just why, mother, for we cannot drown in a frozen river. The river is only frozen in parts, Astrolabe, and I should have no peace all day long thinking of thee upon the ice. But I promise thee not to walk far from the shore. Well, to the river thou mayest go, darling, but promise me not to put thy foot on the ice, not one step, and not to go nearer the river's edge than one yard. If I have thy promise and Denis's promise that he will see that thou dost not forget thyself, well then thou mayest go and set snares with Denis.

I shall be glad when I am a little older, Astrolabe said, taking Denis's hand. And what will you do, little sir, when you are older? I do not know so much what I shall do, Astrolabe answered. I shall escape away from women, of whom I've seen enough. Thou'rt the first man, or very nearly the first, anyway the first I have ever had any real talk with. But aren't we going to the river, Denis? Well, sir, I was thinking that we might spend our day in building a great snare for the wild ducks that come up the river every evening. I saw a great flight of them settle down last night, and began to build the snare yesterday in the wood shed; and going thither Astrolabe was shown the beginning of a long wicker basket, wide at one end, narrowing, and ending in a net. It is so wide at this end that the ducks are without thought of danger and swim into it, thinking to rejoin the ducks they hear at the other end; it will be my voice imitating the talk of ducks they'll hear. Canst imitate a duck as well as that, Denis? asked Astrolabe. And many other birds too, Denis answered, for in our wanderings we often have to live upon what we catch in the

woods; and forthright he began a gabble which no duck would have known was not his native language. But I must learn to quack like that, and while the snare was being woven Astrolabe practised quacking, becoming quickly so skilful that his quacking deceived the nuns, setting them talking and asking each other how the duck or ducks could have got into the convent.

The boy was tiresome withal, for once his thoughts were set on a subject he could think of nothing else, and the nuns wearied a little of his constant running in and out to ask them to come to the wood shed to see the wonderful snare that Denis was making. But when the night came for the setting of the snare he besought them to remain indoors, which they promised to do, a little weary of his antics, saying that they would be glad when there was no more question of catching ducks. The ducks came and many were caught, but the birds were so thin they were not worth killing, and several had their wings cut and joined the tame birds in the poultry yard, feeding with them, and like them, fattening themselves for the table.

#### CHAP. XXXV.

EACH day was a margin of dusk that soon darkened into night, and there was no change in the thick grey sky save when it turned to sulphur over the horizon. It was often said: we shall have more snow, and one morning Astrolabe came running up from the river with the news that men were crossing it on the ice. Might he do likewise? Thou hast not ceased, his mother replied, for all this week and as far back as I remember, to ask me if thou mayest do this thing and that. Alack, it seems to me that I spend all my time saying no. Unabashed, the boy strayed aside, telling of strange birds that came up the river so weak that they could hardly fly, and so thin

are they, he said, that cook won't pluck them; and, mother, the village is full of wanderers from all parts unworthy to be called gleemen; gargil churls Denis calls them. And the words brought the thought to Héloïse that Denis must be bidden away—Cherriez must harbour him. She laid the matter before the Prioress, but her stratagem availed her but little for Denis came up every day from the village to teach Astrolabe music.

The nuns, too, were anxious for instruction in music, and part singing wore away the snow's monotony till the rain came, at the end of February. But it could not melt the snow, so thickly did it lie, and up and down the Seine valley the winds ranged, shaking the poor poplars till the eye pitied them, so tortured did they seem in the blasts. Never shall we see the springtide again, everybody was saying, till one evening the dusk seemed less cold.

Next morning the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and Cherriez's wife thought that the day had come to rid herself of the vagrant that the convent had imposed upon her for nearly three weeks. Thereat Astrolabe was in tears, saying that he had not learnt more than one half of a needful knowledge of the many musical instruments. But, dear boy, he will return, said Héloïse, taking him in her arms, but detaching himself ruthlessly he cried: ah, here he is, coming to say good-bye, mother; and Astrolabe ran to meet Denis in the cloister, and taking him into the community-room Denis took his farewell of the nuns, who, he said, had been very good to him, and he would remember them always. But when may we see thee again, Denis? Astrolabe asked, little concerned whether Denis remembered the nuns or forgot them. Before the summer is over. Bring a gittern with thee, the boy cried, for I would play the gittern and the rebeck and the flute. Now that I know how to write down the tunes, I shall write down every



one that comes into my head. We'll sing them together in the summer, won't we, Denis? If I am alive I will return, little sir, Denis said. But I've been about a great deal and am worn out, as a man is who has travelled France, singing it all over, bringing the news from the north to the south, from the south to the north, for—ah, how many years! As well as I know I am nearly fifty, so set not your hearts on seeing me again, and if it should hap that I die by the roadside, I shall be praying for you in heaven. Not that ye need my prayers, ladies, I know, not as I need yours, and maybe my while in purgatory will be a long one, for no man on this earth can say that he is altogether a good man. But if God spare thee, Denis, and thou shouldst return to us, bring us back news of Jerusalem, said the Prioress. Many are going forth and many are on their way back; hear them all, and we shall welcome thee for the tidings thou bringest. But why, cried Mother Hilda, dost thou speak so dolefully, Denis, as if death were a welcome thing? Well, ma'am, it is welcome to the vagrant, for the vagrant drops into old age soon after forty, and an old monkey, as the saying has it, pleases nobody. None but yourselves, ladies, would have thought it worth the trouble to open a door to save him from the wolves. I take my leave of you all, hoping to see you again. Now, Astrolabe, leave go of my habit and return to thy dinner. Mother, ask him if he will leave his organistrum. But it is with it that he gets his living, my boy. Do go back to thy dinner; hast forgotten that there is pudding? So there is, mother; yes, there is pudding to-day, he replied, and ran away. But the pudding was barely eaten when he was asking for a lute or a rebeck, and on being offered a pair of regals he turned aside affronted and walked about disconsolate, confiding his sorrow to nobody, which was strange, for reticence was not in his humour. A few days later he had recovered his humour enough to ask his mother for a

gittern. I have not money enough, she answered him. When father returns will he have enough? Does father play the organistrum as well as Denis? he asked, and in his eagerness for a musical instrument he would have put many more to her if Cherriez had not come in with the news that Denis had been found dead by the roadside, having tumbled, he said, into a snowdrift. We all thought, said the Prioress, that thou wert weather-wise and knew as well as the birds when the spring was coming in. That is so, madam, but the birds themselves come too soon or go too late. But Denis is not dead? He is not like the birds that we caught together by the river? cried Astrolabe. Not really so dead that we shall never see him again? He wasn't dead, young sir, when we found him; he spoke a word or two about his organistrum, and we understood him that it should be given to the lad who can play it best, and who can play it as well as his pupil? So now, sir—— Astrolabe turned aside and began to cry hard. But, young sir, since it was his wish for you to have it—— You all hated him, the child replied passionately; you wouldn't let him sleep in the wood shed, but sent him down to the village, and you, Cherriez, turned him out into the snow. I couldn't keep him any longer in my hut, Cherriez said, speaking to Héloïse; and you ladies couldn't keep him here, he added. But this I'll say for him, he was the honestest gleeman that ever came through our door—a wicked, lying, blackguardly lot them gleemen; thieving fowls, ravishing girls, telling lies and singing songs, are all they are good for, and their songs are not always good for children to hear. If he had only waited a few days longer, said the Prioress. The spring day tempted him, Cherriez answered. Well, he's gone now, and I wouldn't have the boy take it so to heart. My young sir, he sent you his organistrum. You wouldn't let him sleep in the wood shed, you all hated him, Astrolabe howled. But do not put aside his organis-

trum, my darling, Héloïse said, since he wished thee to have it, and while playing it he will come back to thee as plainly as if he were here. Play one of thy pieces for us and for him. Mother, I can't, but I will to-morrow. Cherriez waited for some recompense for his honesty in refraining from the theft of the musical instrument, and to lead the Prioress's thoughts to her duty towards him, he began to speak of the fall of snow, which none could have foreseen, not even he, though he was weather-wise beyond any man, if the Seine were followed to the sea in search of one. It was as if God had wished Denis's death for his own good reasons; God must have desired to take Denis to himself, he said. It may be as thou sayest, the Prioress answered, and this seeming to be the moment to reward him, she sought for some coins in the satchel that hung from her girdle and gave them to him. And the nuns and their gardener went forth to watch the springtide, the thought in them all being that it seemed certainly as if God had wished to encompass Denis's death. For had he waited a few days more the sweet south wind that was blowing, calling the early flowers into being and the bushes in the garden into buds, would have melted the snow. Denis would have found a lodging and followed some troupe of gleemen during the summer, coming back in the early autumn or winter. The underwoods were lighting up, and along the river's banks kingcups had begun; and Héloïse once again looked back and considered her life, the joy and the wonder of its springtime, now nearly eleven years ago, for she had waited for Abélard in this convent for eight years. Where was he? and why had he not come to release her? Alas, she did not know anything, and lived like the weed in the field. True to him, she was. But of what use is fealty if there be no reward for it? If he has forgotten me, why should I be true? Has he been true to me? Man is never true. And then her thoughts suddenly breaking away from him

and from herself, she said: every nun, except the old ones in whom life is almost dead, burns in this spring-time as I do; and a talk she had had with Angela years back returned to her. Sister Angela had told her that some gleeman or *trouvère* had won Sister Agnes away, and on asking how it was that a woman could love another so deeply as she seemed to have done, Sister Angela answered: Nature will have her way with us despite vows, in dreams if we resist one another too long. And when Héloïse pleaded a more natural affection, Angela answered: sex does not seem to matter, what is important is to love. She had not forgotten Angela's words, and though they were strange to her they found an echo in her, whose nature was to love one man only. Angela, she said to herself, is now thinking of Sister Agnes with the same passion and the same folly as I am thinking of Abélard. Mother Hilda is dreaming of her husband, saying to herself: the dead live in our memories, and they are not dead until we cease to think of them. The dying Prioress sits in her chair dreaming of her husband as a restless spirit demanding further search for his body on the field of battle, and its burial in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, thinking, no doubt, when she does think, of a grave for them both far away in the Holy Land. We are always remembering what has been, Héloïse added; how else should we live, we who have left life behind? And these springtimes are bitter to us. The return of the sun to the earth, the return of the birds to their songs, the return of the flowers to the air remind us that for us there is no return, life will never summon us again. Only the very young, who have no past to embitter the present, nor any thoughts of any future, like my boy, are happy in the springtime, and only for a short time, for in a few years love will fall upon him, and he will become restless and unhappy, as I am. At what age



will he begin to form projects, projects that are never realised?

The sound of the organistrum woke her from her reverie, and she saw Astrolabe going towards the low wall over against the river to play his instrument, his audience the boatmen that passed up and down the current in the great barges. He will weary of this convent, she said, he will weary of me; and the pang that came into her heart hurt like the stroke of a knife. One day he will leave us, mayhap with these gleemen, who will make a singing boy of him, and in her own restless imagination she heard his words: I want to live among men, and once more she began to think that the boy was but an image of his father mentally as well as physically: the same high darling rounded brow overhanging the strangely eager eyes. I am hardly represented in him at all, a look now and again; he is all his father! And Héloïse was jealous of Abélard, and asked why he should have possessed himself so completely of his offspring. And seeing Astrolabe sitting on the convent wall singing to his organistrum, his eyes fixed on the great brown sails of the loaded barges that the wind was bringing up the river quickly, she began to wonder when Abélard would step ashore, saying to herself: men return if they be not dead, and of all in the springtide; why not Abélard? The grass is green along the river bank, the reeds and flags are in flower, the poplars well past their russet hue. But we are not as they. My life, is it over and done? Can it be so? Affrighted, she passed into the convent, and at the same moment a ship steered towards the bank. What ho! boy, cried one of the motley crew on board. Thou playest an organistrum well; wouldst come with us and play it? To which Astrolabe answered: my mother lives here, and though I would like well to sail on the river I cannot do so, having promised her not to leave the shore. Whereupon there was whispering among the gleemen in the

barge, of which Astrolabe took no account, his attention being fixed on a hat trimmed with tall feathers bending in the breeze. He admired, too, a jacket trimmed with streaming ribbons and decorated with many coloured rosettes. Shall I wear a pea-green jacket, he cried out, if mother lets me come with you? Wilt give me a pea-green or a peach-coloured jacket? Any colour that is to thy taste thou shalt have, and hose of red and blue, cried the gleemen. The wallet that thou wearest would be too big for me, said Astrolabe. Hast no smaller one? To which the gleemen said there was one that he could wear comfortably. And what shall I put into it? he inquired. All manner of fruit and bread and onions, and maybe a chicken or a rabbit from the hedgerows. Astrolabe had seen them cooking on the barges as they went up and down the river, and answered: may I cook my rabbit or my chicken as we sail? At which all the gleemen laughed till Astrolabe felt a little ashamed, thinking he had said something foolish. But he was reconciled to himself when the man with the peacocks' feathers in his hat said: thy rabbit and thy chicken will go into the common pot and thou'lt eat with us. If I'm to eat with you I'll run to mother, for indeed I cannot go without telling her. Be not in such a hurry, little man, but tell us first who lives with thee in yon building. Yon building is a convent, said Astrolabe, and the rule is St Benedict. A convent, cried the tall man, as he jumped ashore. And where didst thy organistrum come from, and who taught thee to play it? A gleeman who was with us all the winter sleeping in the wood shed. But he was sent away by the Prioress to sleep with our gardener, Cherriez, who lives in the village in the fields on the other side of the Paris road. And why was he sent away from the wood shed, little man? He lighted ferns and nearly burnt us out one night, Astrolabe answered, and he began to tell how the convent had escaped, and how the old

man, who left them a couple of months gone by, died on the roadside. Cherriez, our gardener, found him, and he brought me Denis's organistrum. Old Denis! one of the gleemen cried. But the tall man who wore the peacocks' feathers did not remember the dead gleeman until the others stepped forward to recall the old man to his memory by many facts. It may be, he said, that the reverend ladies in the convent would like a little instruction in music now that Denis has gone where there is neither music nor dancing. But I thought that heaven was all music, Astrolabe answered innocently, at which remark the gleemen laughed, raising the thought into his mind that perhaps they did not all hope, or perhaps even wish, to go to heaven. If that were so, he hoped they wouldn't tell the Prioress, who, if they did, wouldn't listen to their music.

Can you tell stories of the Crusades? he asked. Troth and faith we can, they cried. Have we not come from Palestine? Then you'll be welcome here, for the Prioress's husband, the Comte Godfrey de Chatillon—— At which name the gleemen became in their turn serious and said: show us the way to the front door of the convent and we will ask admittance. Follow the river's bank till you come to the lane-way, he replied; it will take you to the high road, and if you turn to the left you'll be at the convent door. Meanwhile I'll run up through the orchard and tell them you're here. The Prioress is very ill, he said, stopping suddenly and returning to the gleemen, but I'll ask mother to try to persuade her to allow you to play your instruments in the quadrangle. But will you let me try the flute when the entertainment is done, before you leave? Yes, thou shalt try all our instruments, cried the chief gleeman. Said Astrolabe: then thou mayest be sure I'll cling on to the mothers: there are three, and my own mother—the Prioress, Mother Hilda, and Mother Ysabeau, who looks after our food. And the drink,

interrupted a gleeman; is there wine in the convent? There is indeed, Astrolabe answered, and now—— Now stop a minute, cried the chief gleeman, as the boy was going away. Give the Prioress my name; tell her that the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, just returned from Palestine after fighting the Saracens for the Holy Sepulchre, waits upon her. Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, come from the Holy Land! The Prioress will let us have the entertainment, you may be certain of that.

And he ran up the broad walk, arriving at the convent breathless, saying to one of the sisters: tell the Prioress at once that the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf is at the front door, and if he is not there now he will be in a few minutes. The Prioress, the portress answered, is not strong enough to see anybody. But, cried Astrolabe, he has come from Jerusalem, the great Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, with his gleemen, so thou must go at once to the Prioress, for we should never be forgiven by her if the Comte were sent away without her knowledge. These words did not seem to admit of question, and Astrolabe said he would run on and find the other mothers, for the Prioress might leave them to conclude the matter, she being ill.

It seemed to Astrolabe that luck was on his side, for in the cloister he met his mother walking with Mother Hilda. On their way to church, he said to himself, for they waved him aside. But Astrolabe would not be silenced, and insisted that they should hear that the Comte de Rodebœuf was at their doors with all his gleemen. Héloïse shook her head, but when she heard that the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf had just arrived from the Holy Land she conferred with Mother Hilda, who promised to speak to Mother Ysabeau. They will play all their instruments, Astrolabe cried, clinging to his mother's rosary, and leading her by it; and when they entered the passage on to which the Prioress's door opened, Héloïse said: do not



speak so loud, the Prioress may be asleep or resting. They were met by Mother Ysabeau, who stood barring the way: the Prioress is as strong to-day, she said, as she was yesterday. My son, Héloïse answered, has just brought the news that Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf has returned from Jerusalem and would speak with the Prioress. The Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, from my country, from Arras, the Prioress answered quickly: he may bring news—— Mother Prioress, Astrolabe began, but Héloïse laid her hand upon his mouth and told the story herself, how the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, at the head of a band of gleemen, stopped their boat to listen to Astrolabe, who was playing his organistrum at the end of the broad walk. And they would like, she continued, to give an entertainment in the quadrangle. An entertainment in the quadrangle, the Prioress repeated, and feeling that she was not equal to giving a decision in a matter so strange and unexpected that morning, she said: I should like to hear what Mothers Ysabeau and Hilda think.

You will enjoy it, Mother Prioress, Astrolabe cried. There are great gittern and rebeck players amongst them. Dost think I shall, dear boy? What I shall enjoy most are four boards, she rejoined, in an undertone, forgetful of the quickness of young ears, and the thought that we are all nailed between boards like Denis (Cherriez nailed something up the day that Denis died) came into his mind, chasing all the brightness out of his face, causing him to cling to his mother's habit, though he had but half understood. It was some time before he whispered to her: dost think, mother, that she'll say yes? Mother Ysabeau's face told Héloïse that at least one mother would raise an objection; and the Prioress, too, feared that it would be difficult to win Mother Ysabeau's consent, a thing that she regretted, for if I refuse to allow the entertainment, she said to herself, the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf may go away in anger

without seeing me. And then, turning to Mother Ysabeau, she said: I knew the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf's father, and I knew the Comte himself when he was a child; and it seems hard to refuse to see men who went to the Holy Land willing to lay down their lives for the Cross. I should not like to commit myself to such a refusal. But these Crusaders are gleemen, and we have gained some knowledge of a gleeman this winter, Mother Ysabeau answered dryly. But, Mother Ysabeau, the Prioress replied, the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf is a *trouvère*, which is different from a gleeman, and, as I have told you, I knew his father, and I knew the Comte himself when he was a child; our estates were by each other, our castles visible from the ramparts over the tops of the trees. I can see you're in favour of allowing the entertainment, so I will say no more, Mother Ysabeau replied. But, Mother Ysabeau, I'm not willing to conclude, but would wish that you and the other mothers should meet here in my room so that I may hear what you all have to say. Mother Prioress, I have no wish to withstand your will. You wish to speak with the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, and if you refuse the entertainment the Comte would not be in the same humour to see you as he would if you received his company. If the other mothers are in agreement my prejudices may be set aside. But might it not be well to speak to our chaplain, Stephen, on the subject? On that point I am not in agreement with you, Mother Ysabeau, the Prioress answered; the direction of the convent is with us and not with our chaplain, who, although an excellent man, cannot understand many things that are plain to us. But, Mother Prioress, I would not have you over-tax your strength. My strength is not worth considering, the Prioress returned, and if the mothers agree that the entertainment is to be allowed, I will come down to the cloister to hear the minstrels; my presence will be

necessary, and of my health, I think I can speak with more certainty than another. I have some business, my dear Héloïse, with Mother Ysabeau, and shall be glad if thou'lt go in search of Mother Hilda. May we say, Mother Prioress, that you are for the music? cried Astrolabe. Tell Mother Hilda, the Prioress added, if thou canst find her, that I would speak with her.

I think we shall get our entertainment, Astrolabe said as soon as they had crossed the threshold and the door was shut behind them. For I've taught Mother Hilda to play my organistrum, and Sister Josiane likes music too. Mother Ysabeau is against us, but that won't matter if the other mothers are for us.

And dragging his mother after him he went in search of Mother Hilda, and discovering two sisters in the illuminating-room, whose influence it seemed to him important to have on his side, he appealed to them. The children, said Sister Cecilia, will be delighted to hear the minstrels, and Sister Josiane reminded her that the instruction they had received during the winter from Denis was of great use to them. This was enough for Astrolabe, who continued his quest, asking all and sundry for Mother Hilda, and finding Sister Tetta in the schoolroom sitting in a corner looking very wretched, her indigestion being worse than usual that morning, and averse from the encouragement of such vagrants, he went at her forthright, saying that the vagrants were the gleemen of the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, winning her over by a plea for the schoolroom, which would be disappointed if the minstrels were not given a hearing.

His mother could not restrain him from telling the great tidings to some sisters coming out of church, and a wrangle began, the sisters ranging themselves on different sides, arguing among themselves, till Mother Hilda appeared. Her first words silenced the dissidents: we may not send away those who have fought for the Holy

Sepulchre, so it seems to me. A few minutes after Mother Ysabeau came down saying that the entertainment was to take place at four, in the quadrangle. Whereat a great gabble began among the nuns, all telling the Prioress that the gleemen were gone to the village to seek beds for the night but this search would not detain them long, and an hour later a letter arrived from the Comte, saying that he would return to the convent before his men, for he wished to meet the Prioress before the entertainment began so that he might renew his acquaintance with her and tell the battles he had fought in the Holy Land, giving assurance that the city was still safe in the hands of the Christians.

I see that nothing I can say will dissuade you, dear Mother, from assisting at the entertainment, said Father Stephen. But you do not think, Father, that any harm can come of allowing these minstrels to sing to us in our quadrangle? She waited for him to answer her, and while he considered his answer she ran over in her mind the portly little cleric, the chaplain, liking less than usual his round head and round, rosy face, and of all his manner of chattering through his pursed-up lips. Of course, my dear Mother Prioress, if what you've been told is the truth, and that these men did really fight for the faith in the Holy Land, it would be wrong indeed to send them away from your doors without the usual welcome of bread and wine. But are you sure that these gleemen are speaking the truth and that they have come from the Holy Land? I assert nothing; I merely put it to you, are you sure? Stephen's lack of faith vexed the Prioress, for though gleemen might not always tell the truth, Stephen knew the message that had been sent to her by the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, and to impugn his veracity set her against her spiritual adviser; and to convince him that he was wrong and that she was right, she asked him if he believed that the man who sent the letter that she had handed him to



read was a sham Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf. For if he did not cast doubt on the letter, why did he ask her if she felt quite sure that the chief gleeman was the son of her old friend and neighbour in the Arras country? I would like to hear your objection, Father, to the entertainment being given in our quadrangle. The songs of the *trouvères* and gleemen, he answered, savour too much of the life of the world for the ears of those who have embraced the religious life. But you do not think, Father, that the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf would allow songs to be sung in my convent that were unsuitable to our ears and to the ears of the school children, who are all clamouring for the entertainment?

The argument was continued for some long time between the Prioress and the convent chaplain, till at last a knock came to the door, and a lay sister opened it, saying that the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf had arrived, and hoped to speak with the Prioress. You will give me your arm, Father, the Prioress said; and the lay sister and Stephen exchanged glances and their eyes said plainly: our Prioress is wasting her last strength and we shall not be able to keep her long after the excitement of this day. Will you place my chair, the Prioress said, just here in the middle of the cloister, and throw the door open, for I would see the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf as he comes down the passage from the front door into the quadrangle; and you can put that cushion behind my head. I shall be well enough like that, for indeed my illness is one of your fallacies—a conventional fallacy. The old woman chuckled, for it annoyed her to see that her nurse and her chaplain were averse that she should leave her room to take part in the shows and diversions of the minstrels; and she could see, too, that they did not believe in the nobility of the *trouvère* or gleeman whom she was waiting for.

She was out of her humour, therefore, when the Comte de Rodebœuf walked across the quadrangle, and

so strange was his apparel, so unlike that of a great nobleman, that she could not behold in him the Comte de Rodebœuf whose castle she had often seen from her window through her father's trees and his trees, and it needed all her strength to dissemble and keep her disappointment from Stephen and address Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf with becoming smiles. I am in failing health, she said; pray be seated, Comte, and without remarking his strange clothes, she began to speak of his father. It is in keeping, the Comte said, with the noble courtesy that we cultivate in our country of Arras that you hide surprise, Prioress, at the strange motley you find me flaunting. And forthwith he began to tell her that although he was still the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, his castle and lands were no longer his. In Palestine, he said, I am a soldier of the Cross, but when I return to France, the *trouvère* of other days can find no service, and is obliged to travel at a venture, his voice being sometimes with him and absent as often. And thy friend of other days is no longer a lutanist, for in leaping from a balcony his wrist and some fingers were broken. A strange story is yours, truly, sir. Tell it to me, the old woman said, speaking with gentleness and sympathy, for even in his motley Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf was a knight, and his lithe figure, broad shoulders, and shapely face, lighted with sad blue eyes, pleased her. And the Comte, feeling that what he had to do was to pitch his story in a key suited to her ear, summarised his love adventures, representing them as one great passion which had absorbed his life till God's grace came and called him to the Holy Land. Such is my story, Mother Prioress, said Rodebœuf, since we lived together in the Arras country. Stephen, who stood by them, would have liked the Prioress to put some more searching questions to the Comte, and it was upon his lips to remind her that all gleemen tell the same story—all have been to the

Crusades—but he was able to restrain his tongue, and when the old woman began to ask the Comte if he had met her husband in Palestine, and if her husband's grave were known to him, Stephen turned away, it seeming to him almost an immodesty to overhear the old woman's sweet folly.

And leaving the Prioress under the spell of remembrances that were her life much more than her daily duties, Stephen walked into the quadrangle, whither the lay sisters were bringing benches and seats, seats for the lay sisters and benches for the children, who were just arriving in charge of the schoolmistress, Sister Mechtilde, an almost young German nun, tall and slight, about whom the children grouped themselves, a little group of a dozen, every one anxious to hear what she was saying, to get near her, but every one orderly, none trying to push forward, for Sister Mechtilde was a strict disciplinarian inasmuch as she was always alert, watchful, when she was with the children, gaining their hearts by gentle firmness. Her life was lived with her children, and in their long, straight frocks and veils they made a pretty group on the grass circlewise round her, asking questions, some of which she answered hastily, bidding them to hold their tongues, saying that they must have patience, and leave things to explain themselves.

The choir sisters and the mothers were choosing their places, and the Prioress was still talking to the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, forgetful of the minstrels who were coming, and who arrived a little later, dissipating some very sentimental memories by their parti-coloured garments and their strange instruments. Sister Mechtilde, cried Clothilde, look at that great horn; will they play it, and what sound will it give? Hush, Clothilde, thou'lt hear the horn presently and be able to judge for thyself. Sister Mechtilde, cried another child, look at that round thing the third man this side is carrying; what is it?

That's a drum, dear; they will begin to beat it presently. To beat it! Why should they beat it? And there's another organistrum just the same as Astrolabe's, Sister; is it not the same? There's too much talking, you must have a little patience, and it will all be made plain to you presently. Are they beginning to play now? another child asked. No, dear, they are not; they're merely tuning their instruments. Thine ear, Catherine, must be even worse than I thought it was. The other children laughed, taking pleasure in the discomfiture of Catherine, who turned red and was unhappy during the first part of the performance, but forgot the rebuke in the excitement of that memorable afternoon.

At last the lutes were tuned, and rising from his seat the Comte said: my minstrels are now ready, and by your leave, Prioress, they will begin. Whereupon the Prioress, rising to her feet, bowed an almost royal consent, and the Comte crossed the quadrangle and taking a seat on the edge of the deep wall, one foot on the ground, the other leg dangling jauntily from the parapet, he sang to an accompaniment played by his own lutanist. Stephen asked if the Comte never played the lute. He was the great lute-player of my country, the Prioress answered, but his fingers were broken many years ago in a fall from a balcony.

To concede something to the Prioress's noble lineage, the first song sung was by William VII., Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, and the authorship was announced with a note of deference by the Comte de Rodebœuf. Songs for single and several voices were sung, with accompaniments on lute and lyre, and before each song the Comte de Rodebœuf announced the authorship. The next songs were by Cercalmon, and these were followed by the songs of Jaufre Rudel, Berenguier de Palazol, and Bernard de Ventardorn; and it was not till the audience had just begun to feel that they would like a break in the



entertainment that the Comte de Rodebœuf rose to his feet, and addressing the audience, said: you have now heard some of the most beautiful songs ever composed in this world, and it has come to me to think that perhaps you would like to hear something about the lives of the marvellous poet musicians; if so—— The Comte waited to be told that all desired to hear; the applause left no doubt they did, and he related the story of Jaufre Rudel, who loved a princess far away whom he had never seen, only heard of, which was enough to make other loves seem worthless; of how he had journeyed to her, seeing her for but a few moments before he died. The story was listened to with a pleasure so intense that the tears often rose to the eyelids, and acceding to the demand for another story, the Comte de Rodebœuf told that Bernard de Ventardorn was the son of a bakeress, and carried the loaves in a basket round the castle, singing as he went. Denis had told the same story, and it did not seem likely that two poets, Denis and Bernard de Ventardorn, should have both carried loaves of bread round a castle, singing. Which were they to believe? Before anybody had concluded which was telling the truth, the Comte de Rodebœuf told how this great poet lived and was true to his love. You shall hear him tell himself, he said (a man is only himself when he loves), in one of the most beautiful songs ever made; and the Comte, stepping forward, sang:

quan vei la lauzeta mover :

The song is truly beautiful, the Prioress said, and she sent her appreciation forward by her chaplain, Stephen: and, after bowing in answer to the applause with which the song was received, the Comte de Rodebœuf related the friendship that had never been broken between the two great poet musicians, Bernard de Ventardorn and Berenguier de Palazol. And while in his story the

thought coming to him that the celebrated *tenso* held between the two poets, one taking the part of a Pagan and the other a Christian, was suitable for convent recitation, he began; and the argument was followed with interest till the last stanza, in which the Pagan seemed to triumph so completely that the nuns waited with bated breath to hear the audacious Infidel reduced to naught by the Christian. But no answer came from the Christian, and so natural did this end of the *tenso* seem to the Comte that it was not for some time that he perceived his dilemma; and then, realising what was expected of him, but being unable to invent a suitable answer for the Christian, he clapped his hand to his forehead, and after a moment of meditation he began to apologise to the company for having forgotten the last and most important stanza, in which the downfall of the unbeliever is related. And to pass from an awkward moment, he asked permission to sing a song that had been composed for him, a song, he added, which had much to do with sending him to Palestine to fight the Saracen for possession of the Holy Sepulchre. But who shall I ask to accompany me? he cried aloud, and his eyes wandered round his own minstrels, seeking among the lute and the lyre players. Before his choice fell Astrolabe struck a chord involuntarily, and it seemed to Rodebœuf that it would be a gracious thing to call upon the child to accompany him.

Wilt thou accompany me on thy organistrum? he said, and Astrolabe answered that he thought he would be able to find a suitable accompaniment on his strings if the Comte would sing the melody over to him. A little rehearsal, the Comte answered, and they walked back and forth, the Comte's hand on the boy's shoulder, singing in his ear whilst the boy sought appropriate chords. We may begin now, sir, and Astrolabe followed the Comte's voice with so much sympathy that all the company marvelled, and Héloïse shared in her son's triumph. But

her face took on a look of perplexity, for it began to seem to her that she was listening to one of her husband's songs, not one she had ever heard him sing, but a song so much in his style and manner that she could not think else than that it was his song. It is his song, she said, and the Comte will tell me ; but how can I get near him and talk to him without attracting attention ? She could not but obey the spell that was upon her (Abélard's spell), and rising to her feet, was about to go to him ; but at that moment the Prioress beckoned the kitchen sister to come to her. Our visitors would like to partake of some cake and wine ; is there enough for all ? Plenty, Mother Prioress ; I have been busy all the morning baking, the kitchen sister answered, and hurried across the quadrangle, returning soon after with several lay sisters carrying spiced cakes on wooden platters, cider and wine in earthenware jugs.

At a sign from the schoolmistress, Mechtilde, the children sprang to their feet, delighted at the permission given to them to hand round the cake and wine, which they did, begging of each gleeman to help himself more liberally. Astrolabe needed even less pressing than the gleemen, for with one piece of cake in his hand, and another in his pocket, the greedy boy begged to be allowed to carry a platter to the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf. The moment appeared to Héloïse as hers : for she could go to the help of her son without attracting attention, and after instructing him regarding the distribution of the cake, she asked the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf if the song he had just sung was by Pierre Abélard, the great teacher and philosopher—my husband, she said. Your husband, Sister ? cried he. Yes ; for I am Héloïse, the niece of Canon Fulbert, she answered, and put her question again to Mathieu ; and, his mazed eyes fixed upon her, he told her the song was written for him by Pierre Abélard. But how came you, Sister—— ? Ah, that is too long

a story for me to tell you now, Comte. But when did you get that song from him? Abélard, said Mathieu, was my gleeman when I was a rich trouvère. He left music and art for philosophy, and we did not see each other for many years, not until we came upon each other on the road to Blois. On the road, she said, from Tours to Blois. He left me at Tours with his sister and her husband, who were to take me to Brittany, whither I went with them, for I was then carrying that boy who accompanied you on his organistrum. Pierre Abélard wrote this song for me, Mathieu repeated, within hearing of Astrolabe. But my father's name is Pierre Abélard, Astrolabe cried. Mother, why didst thou not tell me that my father wrote music before? He wrote the song that I sang, said Mathieu. That I accompanied? cried Astrolabe again. Yes, Mathieu answered, and with which I should have gained the prize. Then the song did not win the prize? Héloïse asked. It won the prize, but I didn't get the prize, the Comte replied. Tell us the story, Astrolabe cried. But how could the song get the prize and you not get it too, since the song was written for you?

A moment later they were surrounded, and there was only time for Rodebœuf to pass the word to Héloïse that he was in France but a month, which was interpreted by her that no tidings of Abélard had yet reached him. But her eyes were so suppliant that he apprehended his duty to be an immediate search for Abélard, and Héloïse, reading a promise of help in his eyes, was moved to say: to-morrow at three in the orchard, Comte; do not fail me.

#### CHAP. XXXVI.

THE news that came down next morning from the Prioress's room not being favourable, Héloïse presented



herself before Mother Ysabeau to ask her permission to absent herself from certain duties, saying that the Comte de Rodebœuf was coming in the afternoon to speak to her of the journey he was about to undertake to Brittany in search of Abélard. Mother Ysabeau's face darkened a little, but she dared not refuse Héloïse permission to meet the Comte de Rodebœuf, knowing well that if she did Héloïse would go to the Prioress and get it. So with as good grace as she could command at the moment, she answered: the Prioress would give permission; why, then, should I refuse it, even if I were so disposed, and I am not, for it is but right that you should take all means to enquire out the safety of your one-time husband, who is now your brother in our Lord Jesus Christ. Héloïse thanked her with something like detestation in her heart, for she had read Mother Ysabeau's thought in her face, and was about to ponder on it when it was swept away by a memory of the promise she seemed to have read in Mathieu's eyes. He will not fail me, she said; my life here is ending; every moment is bringing our meeting nearer. But how will it come about? How will it befall? In what shape shall I appear to him? for I am no longer a young girl. Will he love me less? And watching the river going by, her thoughts began to wind out of her present life into her past, and so far away were they from the actual moment that Sister Agatha had to call twice before she awoke from her reverie.

I am glad you have come, she said, giving her hand to Rodebœuf, and when the portress left them, he said: of what were you thinking?—of Abélard? I cannot tell of what I was dreaming, she said, perhaps of the sadness of things. Yesterday there was a moment of hope; but your last words were that you had no tidings of him. But I must not weary you with my regrets. We can talk about him at least. Abélard has told me often of your first meeting, which was before I

knew him, when he was a young man faring forth from his home in Brittany to teach the world. Yes, it was like that, Rodebœuf answered. I was riding from my castle, attended by my gleemen, when a charging boar set my horse plunging. A sudden swerve threw me out of poise, and while seeking my horse we came upon Abélard in an oak wood at midday. My horse had awakened him and he held him by the bridle. The very story that he told me, Héloïse answered. Faith, the Comte repeated, it was my horse that found him and asleep. And you challenged him, Mathieu, with the words: young man, thou'st a lute upon thy back, and Abélard said that a lutanist he was, and you answered: my castle is close by. Yes, it was as you say it, Héloïse. You engaged him, Héloïse continued, to put your songs in order—— He being a better musician than I, the Comte interjected. But did he tell you of the prize song he wrote for me? No, he couldn't have, for it was after leaving you at Tours with his family that he met me on the road to Blois, a ragged gleeman, whom he could barely believe to be the Comte de Rodebœuf. We went on together, for I said to him: a coach will be dragging wearily up yonder hill-side, and if we are there before it we may be rewarded for our singing by the travellers. But, said I, you'll have to play for me, for all that is left of the Comte de Rodebœuf is his voice. I showed him my broken fingers, telling him that I had to leap from a balcony to escape the sword of Raymond de Castel-Rousillon. As Héloïse's face told him that the story of his last meetings with Abélard would not be clear if he omitted any part of the story of the evil bird that had betrayed his love of Margherita, his neighbour's wife, he related the adventure, and how his next love story had led him into the love of a woman whose one thought was tournaments and feasting, and that to retain her love he had assembled many times great companies

of knights and tilted with them all, glad to win her favour at the cost of all his lands. All my possessions passed from me, he said, like sand through the neck of a glass, and the trouvère is now a gleeman.

You have been to the Holy Land? Héloïse asked, and the Comte broke forth again into the story of his unfortunate life; and Héloïse heard that it was about nine years since Abélard overtook him on the road to Blois. Nine years ago! she repeated. I was with child then and had journeyed with Abélard from Paris to Tours, where he left me with his sister and brother-in-law. But go on with your story, Comte; you met Abélard on the road to Blois. A Court of Love was in session, the Comte continued, and I said: many heavy purses are being awarded for poems; if I could win one I should not have to go to the Holy Land to win the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracen. But, said Abélard, no evil bird has cast a spell upon me, so I will write for thee a song that may win the purse thou needest. Now is there a tavern near by where we might write it? There is one by the Castle of Chatelleraud, said I. We went thither, and all night long, whilst the gleemen were drinking and singing and chasing gleemaidens in the garden, Abélard and I were set on the composition of our prize song. You heard me sing it yesterday; a beautiful song it is; it gained the purse of gold, but the purse went to another singer, who heard me singing the song over and over again, and being called before me in the competition, the shameful fellow sang not his own song, which was worthless, but Abélard's. For such is the hap of the luckless, my fate always, and finding myself penniless I entered the army to help to win the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracen. And here I am in France without hope of finding a trouvère to engage me.

But in Palestine great adventures must have happened to you? said Héloïse. Great adventures truly, he said, but

the whole afternoon cannot be spent in relating them, and I am anxious to hear your story, Héloïse. You will trust me with it ? for all the while I have been telling mine I have been thinking how I may help you. But you have not heard of Abélard since the days you've been telling ? she said. Were Abélard dead I should have heard of his death, Rodebœuf answered, and it seems to me that when I have sung at a few more castles where I am expected, I might undertake some journeys hither and thither, picking up news of Abélard, finding him at length, and bringing him to you. Your words bespeak a kind heart, Mathieu, said Héloïse, but if Abélard had not forgotten, he would have come to me long ago. You wrong him, Héloïse. It may be that I do, she said, for my vow was that I should remain here till he returned to me, a priest. I have kept my vow, but has he kept his ? Is he a priest ? You will have to tell me more of your story, for I can make no good sense of it till you do, Mathieu replied. Why should you be here waiting for Abélard to return to you a priest ? That story none knows but myself, she answered, but lest you should think me a foolish woman who dreams, I will tell it to you ; and she related that she had besought him not to marry her in Brittany, saying that women have always been the undoing of men since Eve, our mother, and not wishing to bring ruin upon the world again, I recalled all the stories I could remember, and though he could not deny the truth of any he still persisted, and we went to Paris together and were wedded.

A sad journey it was ; and all the while of it I knew we were riding towards our misfortune, for, worst mistake of all, Abélard chose that the marriage should be kept secret. As if his marriage could be kept secret. Often I said to him : the marriage of Abélard cannot be hidden from the world ; nor was it hidden from anybody. Within a few days it was common talk. My uncle made it public. But why should I tell you any more ? said Héloïse, stopping



suddenly. The Comte pressed her to tell all, and the impulse to tell the secret she had kept hidden in her heart so long being upon her, she said : I never had any wish but Abélard's renown, and seeing that my uncle was determined upon his ruin the thought grew in me that we must undo our marriage, and for this purpose I said to myself : I will return to my old convent and he shall become a priest, for outside of the Church there is no advancement for any man, however great a genius he may be. Abélard was adverse, but one night it fell out that my uncle in wine and anger gave way to such violent words and threats that I left the house in the rue des Chantres and ran to Abélard's lodging. How came it about, and who said the first word, who the second or the third, I have no memory, but it was for his sake that I came hither at the break of day next morning—— And you have been here ever since ? the Comte interrupted. Yes ; and till yesterday I believed in his return to me. But to-day it seems to me that belief is dead. You have lived here, the Comte said, in that black Benedictine robe, for nine years, accepting a life that is not yours, for a man's glory. But I have brought him no glory, she replied, only misfortune ; yet I live among idle prayers, wandering through a life of rule, my life a sort of dazed stupor, no more than that. In the glamour of the day I laugh and talk like another, but in the night I weep, asking myself again and again if he have forgotten me, if he will return, if all be not a mad dream, if it will ever end. If I sleep he comes to me in dreams, but before the moment of our joy he disappears, and I sit up in bed scared, watching the grey window-pane.

This sudden and precise realisation of what her life had been for nine years, and what it still was, swept away all memory of the Comte de Rodebœuf, and his voice startled her when he spoke, saying : I will seek Abélard. But Abélard, she cried, knows where I am. If he have not

forgotten me he would have come hither or sent a message. Have you not told me, the Comte said, of a covenant—— That he may not come hither till he be a priest, she replied. He may still be seeking a bishop to ordain him, not an easy thing for a man convicted of heresy to find. But if this be so, why am I here? Why does he leave me here? Your eyes seemed to promise a search for him yesterday, but in sending you to seek him out I am breaking the covenant; and there may be a reason for this silence. But you would not live and die without knowledge of him? Mathieu said, and after waiting for an answer he began to try to persuade her out of her scruples, saying that his tongue confirmed the promise that his eyes made yesterday. The thought is your own, obey it, she said, since it was sent to you, and on these words they turned into the orchard, unable to bear the melancholy of the river any longer. There's no river, he said, so melancholy as the Seine, for it winds oftener, a deep, silent current, with hardly any eddy in it. The sisters like to come here to watch the boats going by, Héloïse replied, and it's pleasant to see the barge appear, its red sails filled with a west wind; but I am always sorry when it goes away down the river, for I know it is only going away to come back. I do not know why I am sorry for the barge; sometimes I think that I am sorry for everything, for even the old dead barge lying in yonder bed of rushes. But I must not give way. You'll forgive me, knowing how long I have waited. And yet. . . . You have been here till a river flowing through the pleasant lands of France brings you unhappiness, Rodebœuf answered. But your son comes to you leaping and singing through the orchard; he at least is happy. At this moment, perhaps, but he is always craving for something, Héloïse said, with a faint smile. But where hast thou been, my little son, and why comest thou hither singing thy father's song so joyously?

I have come from the village, mother. May I tell Comte Rodebœuf about the gittern that Raoul plays so beautifully? It came from a shop in Paris where one can buy gitterns and flutes and viols and many more musical instruments than I can remember the names of. And from another shop, mother, thou canst buy the swords and the shields and the armour that the Crusaders wear when they go away to Palestine to fight for the Holy Sepulchre. I should like to be a Crusader and sail in a ship down to the sea, and cut off the heads of many Saracens. When may I go to Palestine, mother? And when wilt thou take me to the shop to buy the gittern? And if thou canst not leave the convent, mother, may I go to Paris with the Comte de Rodebœuf? Ask the Comte if he will take thee, Héloïse answered. Will you take me to Paris, sir? the child repeated. For I do want to see Paris. Now which is thy heart set on, he asked—Paris or Palestine; and which wouldst thou like the better, to go to Paris with me or with thy father? So many questions silenced Astrolabe's loquacious tongue, and soon after the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf took his leave of Héloïse.

Will he take me to Paris to see the lute-maker, mother? cried Astrolabe. Yes, I think he will, she answered; and the boy ran up the orchard to tell Rodebœuf that on the whole he preferred the gittern to Palestine, and Héloïse had to call him several times before he would return to her.

Why may I not go to Paris with the Comte de Rodebœuf? he asked. Come to thy lesson, she answered, a little wearied by his reiterated requests. But Astrolabe was unable to fix his attention on hexameters that day; at every moment he would break into telling of the wonderful instruments that the gleemen played. Girard's bagpipe is in the shape of an animal that wears its house on its back, with four little feet to walk on and a head no longer than my thumb. Thou dost not believe me, mother, but Girard would not have told me a lie; we

don't have the animal about here, but it is common enough in other parts. Thou believest, mother? Yes, and what then? Well, Astrolabe continued, the bag of the pipe is sewn into the shape of that animal, while the other end of the pipe is carved. Floriant's bagpipe is in the shape of a serpent that he winds round his body; and just as if his mother remembered all the minstrels who had taken part in the entertainment given in the quadrangle, he continued: Bernard can dance while he plays the gigue, and the organistrum with seventeen strings, to the sound of bells, and he composes jigs to suit the psaltery. Mother, if thou canst not go to Paris with me thou must come to the village and hear Bernard mimic the sounds of birds. There is no bird he can't copy, and so well that the bird thinks it is another bird of the same kind as himself calling to him. But Denis could do that too, Héloïse answered. He could in a way, Astrolabe replied reflectively, but he couldn't pretend to make an attack on a castle, and he was too old to jump through four hoops, and I don't think that he ever said he could play on the gittern and the mondore. I must have a gittern, mother, for one has to learn these instruments early, when one is young, just as I am, else it is difficult to learn them later.

But I heard thee say that thou wert going to be a Crusader. Can't I be both, mother, gleeman and Crusader? Well, there is plenty of time for thinking, Astrolabe, for children do not go to the Crusades. O, but they do, mother, they do, for I have seen them passing in processions, boys with banners, and boys swinging silver censers and singing hymns. So thou wouldst as lief be a Crusader as a gleeman? she asked Astrolabe, and was drawn almost into a meditation by the thought that her son was beginning to pass from her. Can't I be both? the child repeated. Do gleemen never go to the Crusades, mother? Is father in Palestine, and if he isn't,



why shouldn't he come here? Will he never come? I should like to see father. Héloïse did not answer, and afraid that he had vexed his mother by his desire to see his father, he said: but I don't want to see father, for he hasn't been good to thee. Thou mustn't say thy father was not good to me, Héloïse answered. Why does father leave thee here among a lot of womenfolk? the child asked. I am here, Héloïse replied, for I am a nun, and thy father is a priest; at least I believe him to be one. But I don't want to live here shut up with a lot of women, the child answered; I'd liefer fight for the Holy Sepulchre. But thou'rt a child, Astrolabe. Haven't I told thee, mother, that children are going to the Crusades? Cherriez's boy went yesterday, he blurted out. But who has been talking with thee, telling thee that thy father was not good to me, and that he is in Palestine? I didn't say father was in Palestine, only that if he were not, that—— The child hesitated, and Héloïse ended the sentence for him: he would come hither; so say the gleemen in the village, where thou hast been, Astrolabe, despite thy promise. As Astrolabe did not answer, a great fear, come from a passing thought, laid hold of her that Astrolabe, having a musical ear, might be taken away by the gleemen, kidnapped, leaving her without a son to show Abélard when he returned, for she had not yet given up hope.

There was a cause, a reason for his absence, and she fell to thinking of Mathieu's journey to Brittany, and continued to think of Mathieu's chances of bringing Abélard back to her till she remembered that she must get a promise from Astrolabe not to go to the village inn again. Mother, thou art always asking for promises. But art thou not always asking things from me? she enquired. But thou'rt my mother, and he clung to her robe with a pretty, affectionate movement. But if I don't go to the inn I shall not learn to play the gittern, and I do want to play it; it is much

merrier than the vielle, and lighter to carry. And before his mother could answer him he begged for leave to go to the village, for I do want to go so much, mother. And when she asked him why, he answered quickly: to play my organistrum, mother; and when she asked why he didn't care to play it in the convent, he answered: you're all thinking of your prayers, not of me. O, that is sad indeed, she replied, and in the village thou wouldst find eager ears? There may be some gleemen about the inn, mother. And to provoke one of his unexpected answers she spoke of a quiet wood as a better place for music than an inn yard. But one can't play without listeners, he said. Mother, thou knowest that, and art teasing me. But the wood, she replied, is full of birds, blackbirds, thrushes, and these will come down from the branches and hop close to listen to thee. Will they? he asked coseningly, and after meditating a little while he asked if blackbirds and thrushes could tell whether the rote be well played. Astrolabe, thou'st heard them, and spoken to me of their singing, many times. And thinking to embarrass him with a question, she asked if the birds could sing as well as they do if they weren't little musicians.

Astrolabe did not answer, and his mother smiled; and thinking that she had puzzled him fairly, she told him of a short, stocky little bird with a red breast darker than the robin's, and a thick bill, that could be taught to whistle tunes correctly. As correctly as I can, mother? Very nearly, she answered. And this is no joke thou'rt putting upon me, mother? No, darling; no. And if I play the rote long enough and well enough will the little bird come down and sing me his own tune? The bullfinch has no tune of his own, like the blackbird and the thrush, dear, but he will sing to thee the tunes that are taught to him. I will teach him father's tune, he replied, and to hide her emotion from him she spoke of the rabbits

and hares, which like music too, so it is said, and will come out of their holes to listen. But rabbits and hares don't sing, mother. No, but they like music; and to amuse herself and him she related stories of serpents that came out of their holes to listen, and that there was once a piper who played so well that all the rats followed out of their holes. But didn't they bite his legs, mother? No, they followed his piping and he led them down to the river, and they were all drowned. But why did he do that? asked Astrolabe. Wasn't it cruel to lead the rats that loved his music to the river to be drowned? But there was a plague of rats in that town, said Héloïse; they were eating up all the food, leaving nothing for the men and women and children. So they had to get rid of the rats, the child said; and if I played my rote as well as the piper played his pipe, would the rats follow me to the river? Ah, but thou mustn't go to the river. Now there it is again, mother; always something that I mustn't do.

A bell rang; Héloïse caught her boy up in her arms, kissed him, and said: now I have thy promise not to go to the village? and reading in her son's face that her promise would be obeyed her heart was eased. Mother, I'll not go to the village, he said, and she forgot her fear in the delightful thought that while she was praying in church her little son would be in the green wood by the river-side, playing to the demure and speckled thrush, so like a nun, and to the gay and sprightly blackbird that cocks his tail, flaunting himself in the sun, chattering like a gleeman when in luck's way.

#### CHAP. XXXVII.

SISTER AGATHA, Astrolabe said, let me through the gate, for I have given mother my promise not to go to the

village but to the wood by the river-side ; and he began to tell Sister Agatha of the birds that would follow him home, the bullfinch singing his father's melody (if he was sure of finding a bullfinch) ; the thrush and blackbird he knew he would see, but the bullfinch—could she tell him where he might be certain of finding one ? A sister came to take charge of the portress's lodge, and during their casual talk Astrolabe passed out of the gate and crossed the fields forgetful of the thrushes and blackbirds that would certainly give ear to his minstrelsy, his thoughts set on finding a bullfinch. A stocky little bird with a short bill and a red breast darker than the robin's, he said, and before sitting down to play he wandered round the wood, discouraged by the rattling little tune that the chaffinch kept repeating high up in the pines, saying to himself : that bird could never learn my father's song, for the song he sings is always the same, he repeats it like a lesson. And he threw sticks into the tree to frighten the bird away, for with that going on always, he said, my bullfinch (should I find one) will not be able to listen to my father's song. Now do bullfinches hop about in the hedges, or are they out in the branches of the trees ? And he wandered round the little wood, full of many kinds of trees, with dark places in it, hollows that he did not dare to venture into for fear he should meet fairies, or dwarfs, or giants, but kept on the outskirts of the wood, where the trees grew thinner, within view of the fields, casting his eyes into the darkness of the branches overhead, for it was there he was certain that bullfinches perched when there were any. A blackbird ran along the ground and chattered as it dived into the dell that Astrolabe did not dare to enter. Now that that bird is gone, he said, I will try what I can do with the two thrushes yonder. The speckled birds ran in and out of the ferns that were uncurling in the interspaces, picking as they went, stopping now and again, afraid to



approach too near to the little musician. He played his father's song twice over and waited, for the thrushes to begin to sing it. They uttered no note of song, but watched him with inquiring eyes, taking courage every now and then to pick a worm, and it was in the hope of distracting their attention from dinner that he struck up again the same tune ; but, instead of coming nearer, beguiled by the music, as his mother had told him they would, the thrushes flew away.

If the birds won't come, maybe a rabbit or a hare will, and he played on and on. A squirrel came down a tree trunk and he was encouraged, but the squirrel ran up the birch-tree and disappeared, and so Astrolabe was left alone again. He played on, and did not know how many tunes or minutes had passed when the sound of a dry stick breaking under foot nearly frightened him to his feet, for the thought of a giant or a dwarf coming out of the dell was in his mind. But on turning his head he saw neither one nor the other, but a very old man, bent with years. He may be a dwarf who has put on a false beard, Astrolabe said to himself. But don't dwarfs wear beards ? And he was about to take to his heels when the old man called him and said : do not run away, my dear child, but let me listen to thy music, for never have I heard anybody play the organistrum as well as thou. O, sir, said Astrolabe. Thou doubtest my words ? the old man replied reprovngly. No, I do not doubt, the child answered, but I wish you had heard Denis, sir. It was he who taught thee ? the old man asked. Astrolabe nodded, and a sudden mood of shyness falling upon him, he rose to his feet to go ; but the old man called him back, and the two stood facing each other, and the child, not knowing what words to say, said (seeing a long stick in the old man's hand with a crook at the end) : a shepherd, sir ? Yes, indeed, replied the old man ; a shepherd. But where are your sheep, sir ? the child

asked. My sheep follow me. As well they might, Astrolabe said, for I am sure, sir, you're a good shepherd. At which the old man smiled, and turning away from the boy he went to the edge of the wood, and looking across the field he said: my sheep will find me when they have done feeding, a remark that seemed strange to Astrolabe, for there were no sheep in the field. And he was about to ask the old shepherd if it would not be well for him to go in search of his sheep, and yet if he did the old man might never come back, and he wanted ever so much to play to him, for he was tired of playing to thrushes and blackbirds, and bullfinches were nowhere about. Do you know, sir, a stocky little bird, that can learn tunes and repeat them truly? The old man said that he had heard of bullfinches that could whistle tunes. And the child's thoughts passing from bullfinches to himself broke the pause: would you like to hear me play, sir? I would indeed, the old man answered, and never did Astrolabe play to anybody that listened so well as the shepherd, for he sat, his eyes fixed on the boy, his feet crossed, his elbow resting on his knee, his chin in hand, his beard flowing through his fingers. And when Astrolabe had played two or three pieces, he said: now tell me, who was thy master? for a good one he seems to have been. And bubbling over with excitement, Astrolabe told the story of Denis coming to the convent pursued by wolves, and of his departure in the springtide and the finding of him dead by Cherriez, their gardener, his organistrum by his side. And it was he who taught thee to play it? the old man said again, his eyes fixed intently on the child. Yes, and the pipes, and on the gittern a little at the inn, for we have no gittern. But it couldn't have been Denis that wrote the beautiful song that thou hast just played to me? Why couldn't it have been? Astrolabe asked. Denis wrote music. But was it? said the old man. No, it was my father, years ago; a prize song, mother

tells me, that he wrote for the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, who came in a barge from the Holy Land, whither he went to fight for the Sepulchre. And one story leading to another, it came to pass that Astrolabe mentioned that his mother was a Benedictine nun in the convent of Argenteuil. A nun, said the old man; then thy father is dead? We don't know, Astrolabe answered; mother says he is not, but she hasn't seen him for many years. One of these days we shall see him, however, for the Comte de Rodebœuf is sure to meet him again in his travels, and he will tell him where he will find us. And you too, sir, if you should come upon Pierre Abélard, tell him that we are here, and that he will hear me sing and play the song he wrote for the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf.

I have travelled a long, long way, the old man answered, and meet everybody on my rounds, and when next I see him I will tell him all you say. So you know my father? He composes the best songs in the land of France, the old man replied. Do you know one? the child asked, and the old man sang a song which seemed to Astrolabe like the song that Rodebœuf had taught him. And who may you be, sir? he asked. I am, the old man said, Jesus Christ, come again upon earth to beg those who believe in me to fare to Palestine for the rescuing of my Sepulchre from the Infidel. But the Sepulchre has been rescued from the Infidel, my Lord Jesus, Astrolabe answered, as you must well know, sir. But the Infidel has begun to get the upper hand of the Crusaders; more are required, not to fight but to pray. Prayers are powerful and I'd sooner have my Sepulchre won back to the Christians by prayers than by swords. I will pray, Astrolabe said, all day and all night, that your Sepulchre, Lord Jesus, may be won by prayers, for then I shall know that I have helped you, who died on the Cross for us. Though I haven't been very pious, I will be in the future now that I have seen you, sir. Thou'rt a good boy,

that I can see, the old man said, and will be able to win other children to pray, and to go to the Holy Land itself to beg Saladin to withdraw from the country of Jerusalem. But mother says it is a long way, Astrolabe answered, and the old man told him that children were assembling at Saint-Denis, a town on the other side of Paris, and that if he followed the Paris road he would meet the wagoners going thither, who would take him, for it is too far for thy tender legs, he said. But, good sir, I mean my Lord Jesus, I cannot leave my mother. When I was on earth did I not say, dear child: leave thy father and mother, leave all thy goods and chattels and follow me? Am I to leave my mother? If thou wouldst win honour and glory, little man, go to Saint-Denis, and say that I bade thee go thither. I have not yet told thee that Saint-Denis is the burial place of the great martyr Dionysius, one of the seven holy men who came to France and baptized many. But like all those who loved me, he was beheaded in the reign of Valerian after much cruelty and torment, and was thrown into the very river thou seest over yonder, into the Seine. But so great was the power of God that his body rose to the surface, and he swam after his head, which he captured without much difficulty, and walked with it in his hands to the place in which he wished to be buried. Did you not tell me that Saint-Denis was on the other side of the Paris road? I did indeed, dear child. But is not that a long way for a man to walk, carrying his head in his hands? Astrolabe asked, and was answered that the saint accomplished this great feat by the power of God, to whom all things are possible.

And along what lanes do the wains pass that are taking the children to Paris for the Holy Land? Astrolabe asked, and before the priest could answer Astrolabe was telling how Cherriez's son fell into a sickness, for, being the only son, his mother and father would not allow him to join the children's pilgrimage. The boy's parents had no thought



for my suffering on the Cross. Did you suffer more than the robbers, sir? My sufferings compared with theirs were as seventy is to seven. But you died before them. I lost my temporal life, the old man answered, and as if to stop further questions, he said: the wain goes by about this hour at the corner of the lane, and all thou'st to do is to hold up thy hand and the wagoner will draw rein for thee. Soon after the rumbling sounds of wheels were heard, and the priest and Astrolabe started running, but the driver's eyes were turned from them, and a wain, full of children swinging censers and singing hymns, went by them. We have missed the wain, but it will pass this way again to-morrow; and now I must go and look after my sheep; I stayed too long listening to thy playing. Whereupon he went, leaving the child, to return to the convent very unhappy, trying to recall his father's song, the one the old man had sung for him. But it eluded his memory, which was unlucky, for he could not tell his mother that he had met Jesus Christ in the wood till he recalled the tune; the first thing his mother would ask him would be to sing it, and she wouldn't believe that he had forgotten it, for he never forgot a tune.

He remembered that Sister Agatha's keys were nearly always at her girdle, but she left them on a nail sometimes and went away on an errand, but that didn't happen often, and he would rather die than that his mother should think him a wicked boy. If it had been anybody else than Jesus—a priest, for instance—he wouldn't have listened. But Jesus must be obeyed, and his thoughts turned to the convent walls. The ground is higher down by the river and softer, he said to himself, than elsewhere, and once on the other side I've only to run up the lane. But which hour of the day shall I choose? he asked himself, concluding that to go early in the morning, after Mass, would give him some two or three hours' start of Cherriez, who would be sent after him. More than three,

he added, for he's a hungry man about midday, and will not go after me till he has had his dinner.

### CHAP. XXXVIII.

ON hearing that he was not in the convent the conviction pierced Héloïse that she would not see her son again, and she shook her head at Madelon's words that they would find him in the inn singing and playing to the gleemen. but she had to go thither, and for a moment it soothed her to hear that there were no gleemen in the village—the last had left some days before. He may be in the wood, she said. What wood ? asked Madelon, and Héloïse told her that she had given him leave to play to the blackbirds and thrushes. Yes, and to the bullfinch, she cried. But I have no heart for talking. But, dear mistress, he would not loiter in a wood, not till this hour. A wolf ! Héloïse cried, and the wood was searched in vain for his little bones. No wolf has been here, Madelon said, and the women stood staring at each other, till one of the peasants who had followed them spoke of the children that the priests were urging to join the army for the Holy Land. If he has fallen in with one of the wains that take them to Saint-Denis, then we have lost him, she said. The gleemen might have yielded him back to us for money, but the priests will not. We must seek him in Saint-Denis, Madelon, and appeal to the Archbishop. The King shall hear of this, Héloïse cried, and it was in a frenzy of grief that she came before the Prioress to ask her for leave to seek Astrolabe among the crowds of children the ecclesiastics were collecting at Saint-Denis. Yes, to Saint-Denis thou shalt go, said the Prioress, and Cherriez to all the villages whither he may have strayed. Yes, that is so, the distracted mother answered ; and as soon as the door closed behind her the convent went to

prayer, for though all the nuns knew in their hearts that the Church was calling the children to help the Crusaders to complete the conquest of the Holy Land, they could not but think that the Sepulchre might be won without the sacrifice of their boy.

The mothers, the choir, and the lay sisters joined in prayer, and the prayer was the same on every lip, that our Lord's Sepulchre might be restored to Christendom without Astrolabe being sacrificed. It seemed as if God could not do else than spare him, and so united was the convent in supplication that when Sister Agatha opened the door to Héloïse her words were: hast found him? Héloïse wailed. He has not come back to us, Sister Agatha continued; Cherriez has searched all the villages. We shall never see him again, Héloïse cried, unless he has joined some gleemen, who will bring him back at the end of their round. No more than that hope is left to us. I have gone among the children assembled at Saint-Denis for the pilgrimage, and have much to say to the Prioress. You will find her in her room, Sister Héloïse. It is Héloïse returned to us, Mother Ysabeau said. Hast found him? the Prioress cried from her chair. He is not amongst the pilgrims, unless they have hidden him; and she wailed out the scenes she had witnessed at Saint-Denis, parents crying for their children, wringing their hands, tears running down their cheeks, appealing to the priests and bishops, but never getting an answer save the ready-made one: the children have vowed to go to Jerusalem to exhort Saladin to yield the tomb of the Lord Jesus to those who believe in him. But the children, I answered them, cannot take vows to leave their parents. Even so, the Pope may liberate them from their vows. We cannot, was the reply we got, hearing muttering that none but heretics would seek to prevent children from obeying the Divine Will which had fallen on the city, on town and village, finding its

way into isolated hamlets, setting the children's feet on the road to Marseilles, where they would embark for Palestine.

On these words Héloïse fell into a chair overwhelmed, unable to complete her story except in broken sentences : to wit, that she had heard it said that it would be a worse evil to keep the children back than to let them go, for those that were detained against their will died of their great longing to serve Jesus. Amid stories of miracles and prophecies she had struggled through the dense throng assembled at Saint-Denis to pray beside the relic of him who recovered his head from the flood and carried it in his hands to the place where he desired it to be buried ; and to satisfy the curiosity of the Prioress she told of banners embroidered with the Cross and ecclesiastics swinging censers, saying that she once seemed to hear her boy's voice in the hymn, *Veni Sancte Spiritu*, but could not get through the throng. I was pushed back and doubts were cast on my robe—no true Benedictine nun would ask for her child back, it was said—at most she is a widow who has taken the veil, and therefore no true bride of Christ.

A cloud gathered on the Prioress's face and she asked some questions, learning that her letter had obtained lodging for Héloïse and Madelon in another convent of their Order. But when my quest was made known, Héloïse said, I encountered dark looks in the convent, and always the phrase : why seek him whom it is the will of God to take from thee, Sister ? It surprises me to hear that the Prioress of a Benedictine convent should regard so little a recommendation from the convent at Argenteuil, Mother Ysabeau replied dryly ; we are not all of the same mind regarding this pilgrimage, which falls cruelly on parents, and we are sorry for Héloïse, her loss is also our loss, but she'll remember later that if God has taken her child from her it was for his own good purpose. He may, Héloïse said,



have joined some company of gleemen, and in that case he will soon come back to us. A smile glided into Mother Ysabeau's face, and she considered with satisfaction that she had always opposed the admission of vagrants into the convent. She said : if the gleemen have taken him he may return to us. But how will he return ? Soulless, I fear, for these gleemen are the offscourings of the world ; but if he have joined the pilgrimage he will be returned to us hereafter, and for all eternity. Theology is easier for childless women than for parents, Héloïse answered passionately, and I have no heart to argue with you that we need not lose our children that they may gain heaven ; enough it is to remind you that Mary was afflicted and wept at the foot of the Cross. Sister Héloïse is right, the Prioress interposed, for it may be doubted if God placed the maternal instinct in us so that we may deny it, and as she says, Mary—— It was far from me to say that a mother's love should be put aside, trampled on, Mother Ysabeau interrupted, but are we not taught resignation to God's will ? There is always a seeming conflict, the Prioress answered, between the spirit and the flesh. We are as God made us, half spirit, half flesh ; our instincts as much as our souls are the will of God. And have we not got it on the authority of the Evangelist that Jesus called from the Cross to his mother : mother, behold thy son ? Even if we could we must not put our instincts aside, lest God should deem us unworthy of his love without them. I am going too far, maybe ; such questions as these we cannot decide ourselves, we should refer them to our spiritual guides. It was so with me when the news of my dear husband's death reached me. My sister said I must remember that he died fighting for the Holy Sepulchre and that we should meet in heaven ; but it was hard for me to think of years and years going by without my seeing him. My sister lost her husband

soon after ; it was not till then that she was able to take pity upon me.

Mother Ysabeau and Héloïse listened, knowing well all that the Prioress had to say and that her exordium would not be completed in less than ten minutes, and for about that time she followed wandering memories until at last she could remember no longer why she had started out on a long story which, it occurred to her suddenly, she must have told before. I am afraid I've told that story already. I have wearied you both. I have been a little more prolix than usual this morning. The nuns protested, but the Prioress said : it is kind of you to bear with an old woman's memories, especially Héloïse, who has her own griefs to attend to now.

Héloïse took these words as permission to absent herself, and as she descended the stairs her thoughts turned to Mother Ysabeau, whom she caught sight of going from the schoolroom to the novitiate. And then her thoughts turned suddenly from the hated nun, for the sight of the library awakened her to a sense of loss. It was in the library that she used to teach Astrolabe Latin. The *Æneid* lay on the table (Sister Josiane had not returned it to the shelves) and dropping into a chair she fell to thinking of the good progress he was making in Latin and French, a startled look coming into her eyes, for she might never see him again. But this could not be ; he would come back to her, unless he was murdered, and who was there to murder him, and for what reason ? None. But if he were in that procession he might perish by the roadside, drop out overcome by heat and dust ; and in her imagination she saw the white dust rising from the road, for there was no breeze in the air. How he will suffer from the heat of the way, she said, if—— But he may be with *trouvères* and gleemen ; if so, there is hope. Her thoughts melted away, and when she awoke from her reverie the first thing that came under her eyes was the

story she had written for him, *Peronnik the Fool*, the sight of the manuscript bringing back the intimate hours of her life—mother and son sitting side by side, teacher and pupil, and after a little while she remembered him sitting on the edge of the well singing so beautifully that all the nuns came to the windows to applaud their little serenader. But afraid that he might fall backwards into the well, she had scolded him. Had she known that he was going to be taken from her she would not have scolded him. It seemed to her now that she was always scolding him or answering: no, darling; no. How often had she spoken these words. But all was different now; if he'd only come back he might do what he liked—tease her from morning to evening. How happy she would be to answer: darling, yes, but have care, lest—

But she would never hear his voice again. She might never hear him sing, or speak, or sigh, or cough. It might well be that he was afraid to return lest she should scold him for going to the village. Why had she forbidden this innocent enjoyment to him? He liked music, it was a gift that came to him from his father, and if he'd only return she would let him spend whole days in the village, yes, whole days, if he would only come back. Was it gleeman or priest who had robbed her of him? Unable to resist the impulse, she fell upon her knees suddenly to pray that he had gone away with the gleemen, for if that were so he would return to her, telling her joyfully of all the instruments he had learned to play, the gittern, the lute, the psaltery. He had wanted her to take him to Paris to buy a flute. If he would only come back she would buy him three flutes, and she almost swooned in the joy it would be to clasp him to her bosom once more, feeling his warm body in her arms, his knees against hers. To kiss him, ah, to kiss him; but he was gone—gone—gone, and these words sounded very dismal in her ears.

Once more she fell to thinking, looks, words, gestures floating up to the surface of her mind, and quarrels long forgotten. The worst pain of all was the thought that she had not loved him enough. She had loved him, but not enough, and her conduct towards him seemed full of mistakes. Of course she had tried to teach him, and perhaps her rule was severe; and once again she turned to the past, dredging it in the hope of bringing up some cause that would explain why he had run away. It might be to escape from the nuns, for boys of that age look to men rather than to women, and ever since the minstrels came to the convent he had spoken to her of men, asking her why she lived in a convent, why she was a nun, and if she would go on being a nun always. So she must not blame him, for it was not for lack of love of her that he had left her, but for weariness of the convent, which lay upon him heavier than it lay upon her, and very often it lay upon her very heavily indeed. It was her vow to Abélard that had enabled her to bear the convent life for so many years, but her boy had not pledged himself to anything, and it was natural that he should say to himself: mother would not take me to Paris to buy a flute, what harm to go away in a boat with the trouvères and gleemen for a week, for a month, for two or three? Mother will grieve, of course, and be frightened, but I cannot do else. The river might have tempted him, she said; every child likes a boat and a sail.

Her hope was that it might all have happened as she imagined it happening, and these hopes caused her almost dead life to quicken; but as her hopes faded her life became empty as a shell, and it often seemed to her that she was no more than a ghost, so detached was she from all worldly ties. The nuns had prayer; some believed in heaven, some were afraid of hell, but she had no thought for these beliefs, less now than ever. So she fed upon her grief from day to day, finding her way instinctively



to the room that Astrolabe had lived in, spending many hours alone there. All other rooms were naught to her; but the pillow on which he had laid his head was a reality that she could appreciate, even comprehend, and returning from his bed she stood looking across the quadrangle, noticing the roofs, for he had often spoken to her about them, telling her of the eaves under which the swallows had their clay nests. One of the things that made him such a delightful companion was that he was always curious to see and to hear. Why do the swallows come, and whither do they go, and why do they return? he had often asked her, telling that he tried to feed them with bread, but the sparrows ate all the bread. Swallows, she answered, live upon flies, and he would have had it from her why one bird could eat what another could not. Her memories of him filled her eyes with tears, and turning from the window she opened a drawer, and taking out the clothes he had left behind, she examined them to see if they wanted mending. Few they were and scanty enough, but he might be glad of them if he returned, and she began to mend them, forgetful for the moment that he had run away and might never return to her.

But not many stitches had she put into his hose when a road full of hot dust stretching forward through a country of red hills rose before her eyes, with a throng of children in it, the weak ones falling out of the ranks, until the children came to a great, deep, silent river. A boat was there to take them across, but it was laden to the gunwales when it floated away from the bank, to be overwhelmed by a tree floating down the current. She uttered a cry and stared about her, returning to her senses quickly, thankful that she had been dreaming—a waking dream without any truth in it, she said, but bad enough while it lasted. She continued her sewing mechanically for a while, but before long the pilgrim children reappeared to her, this time in a forest filled with

lurking wolves, and with Astrolabe's hosen again slipping from her fingers, she sat watching the evening sun shining on the tiled roofs opposite, her soul uplifted in prayer that he had not been beguiled by the hope of winning the Sepulchre from the Saracen. There were three linen tunics that needed mending, and she was glad to come upon a rent in the surcoat he wore over them.

The days went by, the same thoughts returning as she sat sewing, and then it seemed to her that she had grieved enough and could grieve no more. She descended to the refectory, and was glad that the meals were eaten in silence. The nuns rose from their places and left the chapel on different errands, Héloïse returning to the room in which her son had lived, to continue the mending of his garments. But if he have jumped into a barge and gone with gleemen down to Normandy, and is singing with them from town to town, from castle to castle, he will not return for months, perhaps for years, and the cloak that I am now mending will be too small for him! She picked up the cloak from the floor, where it had fallen, and continued her sewing till a sudden thought entered her heart, and it seemed to her that the pain she suffered was greater than any pain she had felt before. It flung her upon her knees, and she prayed that whither her son was gone might be made known to her. But of what good to me is the truth? Be he with Crusaders or gleemen he is lost to me. Another outburst flung her on her knees again to pray that Abélard might not return till his son was given back to her. But would the hope help her to bear with the agony of living? (she had borne the drudgery till now), and it seemed to her that she must turn to poison or knife for release, till she said unto herself that death would be no sufficient escape for her. She must live to tell him the story, else he would execrate her memory. He must not think ill of me, and rather than that should happen I

will endure this convent life still a little longer. As she stood thinking how she might redeem herself from blame when she and Abélard came face to face, the quiet of the convent began to awaken her to a still deeper sense of her loneliness. I am forgotten even by the nuns, she said, remembering suddenly that since her return from Saint-Denis she had lived more as an oblate in the convent than a true member of the community. The Prioress, who had known much grief in her life, allowed her the privilege of solitude, and whole days passed without a knock ; but now one came, and she heard Mother Hilda's voice asking for admission, which she gave gladly, for Hilda's voice would enable her to put aside her memories, and her troubles for a little while. But all about her was the litter of her sewing, and to avoid questions, she said : the weather has been very fine for the last few days. Shall we not go out and enjoy it together ? It was for that I came hither, Mother Hilda answered, and the two nuns descended the stairs, but before they had crossed the threshold into the open air, one of the sisters came with a message from the Prioress : the Prioress is waiting for you, Mother Hilda, in her room. All the mothers are there, and she will be glad to see you too, Sister Héloïse, a little later. We were going for a walk together, Héloïse answered, and Mother Hilda, interrupting sharply, said : I cannot keep dear Mother waiting ; I am sorry. And she went away, leaving Héloïse in the broad walk leading from the orchard to the river to watch the swallows. Thousands were in the air, and the birds recalled Abélard's words : it seems as if the birds took pleasure in flight. Do we not take pleasure in walking ? she had answered. A simple answer, truly, but they had found pleasure in it, for they loved each other then. But now ! Now I have nobody, neither lover, nor husband, nor son, not even this black Benedictine robe ; and she had begun to consider the mockery of it

when the sound of footsteps on the gravel behind her caused her to turn. It was Sister Agatha bringing with her the Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf, the *trouvère*. Thou hast found him? Hast seen him? she cried. He is in Brittany, Rodebœuf answered. But of whom art thou speaking? she cried, almost hysterically, and he answered: I am speaking of Abélard, who is in Brittany. In Brittany, she answered, with his people? A great light of joy came into her face; she looked like one transfigured; but soon the light dimmed a little and she said: but Brittany was never near to his heart, though he came from thence. In Brittany he cannot be. No; thou art mistaken. Mistaken! he said, and he told her of gleemen who had wandered to a monastery built on a cliff-side and sung some songs in the Abbey of Saint-Gildas to Abélard—— Who is the Abbot? Héloïse cried. Yes; and who, on hearing the songs, which were his own, asked the chief gleeman if he knew the *trouvère* who had written them, to which the gleeman answered that the songs were sung everywhere in France. But they must not be sung here, Abélard replied, for they are my own songs, composed before calamity brought me to repentance. By the stories the gleemen told me, I judge that the Abbey of Saint-Gildas stands in a wilderness of rocks, seaweed, surge and screaming gulls. He has gone into the wilderness, Héloïse said, to repent of sins committed with me. Philosophy, of which he was the divine master, laid aside, poetry and music forsaken; well indeed might he speak of calamity. No more do we know about him than the story I heard from the gleemen, Rodebœuf said. For what purpose, Héloïse asked, should they tell you lies? None that I know of, he answered. Why should gleemen wander to coasts out of the path of gleemen? she questioned. And why should Abélard have gone thither? Because all men wander. Be it so, thy business is to find



him and to bring him hither. But he knows where I am, and he comes not, for he has repented and prays that he may not remember me. But go to Brittany, Mathieu, and tell him that I am weary of waiting in this convent. I will go, Rodebœuf answered; and the moon under which the swallows are flying now will not have waxed and waned twice before I am back with news of him. Your tidings, good or evil, will make an end to the present, she said. The Prioress is waiting for me in her room. I bid you farewell.

She looked back to see him hurry away, and stopping on the stair she said to herself: the time has come for me to tell why I am here. Is it thou, Héloïse? Yes, it is I, she answered; my excuse for having kept you waiting, dear Mother, is that the Comte de Rodebœuf was here with news of Abélard. News of Abélard, the Prioress repeated, and what may his tidings be, dear child? But before Héloïse could answer, the Prioress's thoughts had returned to the peril in which the convent stood, and she began to tell it, but was stopped suddenly by a woman's curiosity to hear of a returned lover. News of Abélard! she said, breaking off suddenly almost at the outset of her own story, and Héloïse related as much of hers as it seemed to be her duty to tell.

You are pained, dear Mother, as indeed I knew you would be, to hear that I have been living for nearly nine years with a lie in my heart always and often on my lips. The Héloïse you knew is not the true Héloïse, and it pains me as much to tell that I came hither to wait for Abélard as for you to hear it. But it was not in thy mind to live with Abélard again, Héloïse? It was, dear Mother, for to do so was the promise between us, and it could not be else, he being he and I being I. The Prioress did not answer at first, and when her words came they were gentler than those Héloïse expected. I know, she said, how God has wrought woman's life cunningly

into her love of man. We do not think outside of our love. But I am fain to believe, Héloïse, that you are telling a tale against yourself, and harshly, when you say that if things had come to pass as you wished them, you would have put vows aside and lived with Abélard in sin. Nor can I believe that he, as a priest, would have connived. Blundering there must have been on both sides. My story pains you, Mother, but I could not keep it from you any longer. We fall into sin, Héloïse, for the flesh is weak, almost unwittingly. But to plan a sin, to live amongst us, looking forward month after month, year after year, Héloïse. The old nun sat looking with imploring eyes, and Héloïse answered her: it may be that I have not sinned against God though against the Church. Against God and not against the Church? the Prioress repeated. But how can that be? Heresy is on your lips, Héloïse, and nothing is more terrible than that, worse even than sin. The Church, dear Mother, received her wisdom from God in the beginning and still receives wisdom from him, century after century; but though the Church cannot err, God being with his Church always, we must not forget that God is above the Church and sees into the heart as even the Church cannot see, judging men by their hearts, for the sin is in the intention rather than in the act. One moment more, dear Mother, and I shall have done. Abélard's teaching is as I have often told it to you. He may be wrong in the eyes of the Church, but being sincere in his belief, he may be right in the eyes of God. His heart, I know, was without guile, for it was I who persuaded him against marriage in Brittany, and, when in obedience to him I came to Paris with him and was married, I went to him, saying: thou seest that all that I told thee has come to pass. Fulbert, my uncle, is making known our marriage to all the world, and if a great philosopher is not to be lost to the Church, this marriage must be undone; and there is but one way to undo it—

by my taking the veil. Then thou'lt be free to enter the priesthood and make an end of heathendom. Abélard has put it to Bernard again and again: faith may be enough for those who have faith, but how would you bring the heathen into the Church except by reason? To these questions Bernard has never found an answer, and Abélard has replied to his silence: by neglecting the Infidel thou'rt neglecting the work of God, for has he not said: go forth and preach to all men? You came to my convent that a philosopher might be saved to the Church? That was indeed a thought that God might have put into your mind, but you tell me that—— Without my love of Abélard, Héloïse interrupted, I should not have been able to live here for nine years, as I have said, with a lie in my heart always and often a lie on my lips. God, who looks into the heart, knows that I have suffered. The Comte Mathieu de Rodebœuf came to-day with tidings of Abélard, who is now in Brittany, the Abbot of Saint-Gildas, and therefore I judged that the time had come for me to make confession to you. For me to remain here any longer—— But you're not leaving us? Why should I remain? Though there was neither son nor lover, I could not. But there are both; I must seek my son first, and then my husband. You said, Mother, that you had a story to tell, if you do not deem me unworthy to hear it.

Only this, Héloïse, that it is not necessary for you to leave us; we are all leaving Argenteuil in a few days, for the Pope acquiesces in our expulsion from this house and these lands. But we thought—— Héloïse answered. Ah, yes, the Prioress interrupted, we all thought that the Pope would revoke that Bull; but Suger, the Abbot of Saint-Denis, has influence with the Pope and with the King, and we shall have to leave here within the next few days. But the bishops and the clergy will oppose so cruel an act, said Héloïse. We cannot reckon upon

their help, for Suger has made out a good case against us, and in reply to further questions from Héloïse, she related that Suger, while a novice in the monastery of Saint-Denis, made himself acquainted with all the details of the charters of that monastery, and undertook to prove that the lands of Argenteuil belonged to his monastery and should be restored to it. The charter goes back to the time of Clothaire III., and it appears certain that the donators left these lands to the monks of Saint-Denis, who, however, made so little use of them that Charlemagne took them over and gave them to his daughter, Theodrade, and Adelaide, wife of Hugh Capet, built the convent. A hundred years went by, and the riches of the convent excited the cupidity of Suger, who, as I have said, Héloïse, has influence with the Pope, Honorius II., and with the King, and he has never ceased to try to dispossess us. The deeds make it clear that Hermenric and his wife, Numana, gave these lands to the convent of Saint-Denis and that Louis the Debonair decreed that they should return to this convent after the death of his sister, but the Normans sailed up the Seine and pillaged and destroyed Argenteuil; and under Hugh Capet the monks omitted to claim their rights. But now, after two hundred years, they are pressing their claim, and it has come to pass that the house we have lived in so long, and the lands about it, have to be given back. So you see, Héloïse, there was no need for you to decide to leave us. Some of us will go to other convents, some to their parents and friends. But there are some here who have no parents and no friends, and what will become of them? cried Héloïse. The monks of Saint-Denis, by never exercising their rights, have lost their rights in these lands. The present Abbé of Saint-Denis has the ear of the King and the Pope, the Prioress said. But you, dear Mother, are the widow of Godfrey de Chatillon, and you come from a family as great as the one that you entered by marriage, and the King



would not sacrifice the aristocracy of his kingdom to please a greedy prelate and infamous monks, the irregularity of whose lives is—— If the lives of the nuns at Argenteuil, the Prioress answered, were irreproachable, the claim of the monks might be set aside. But our convent, alas, is far from being blameless. I am reproached by the nuns and clergy, and by myself for having yielded in many instances where I should have been firm, the nuns saying to me that they had vowed to obey certain rules and that these they would obey, but none other; and in fear lest the harsh rule would prevent rich postulantes from joining our Order I acquiesced, added to which ill-health, sorrow, grief for my husband's death, weighed me down, poisoned my life. I was a broken old woman when I was elected to the priorate of this convent for my rank rather than for personal reasons. I should have refused the honour that was imposed upon me, but my will failed me then, as it has failed me often. Tears rose to the Prioress's eyelids, and it was a long while before the old woman could resume her narrative.

The year and the season that Madelon came to fetch thee are well in my mind. Was it not then that we were all going to Argenteuil to see Paula's baby, now a growing girl employed in the laundry, who is thinking of entering the religious life? That scandal was not forgotten when another fell upon us. Sister Agnes left us for a gleeman, so it is said by her enemies, but none knows with whom she fled. Sister Angela left us last month in the belief that the beauty of her hair would convert Saladin to Christianity. The beauty of her hair! Héloïse repeated. That Saladin's redemption should come through the gold of her hair was the story she told me, the Prioress answered, and when I reasoned with her she said that she had seen Saladin in a dream, his dark straight hair like ebony and his body pale as gold as he lay asleep in a tent. And leaning over to hear his dream Angela

heard from him that the East was longing for union with the West, and that the gold of the morning and the gold of the evening should undo the knot. But what knot? Héloïse asked. The Sepulchre, I understood her to mean, the possession of which has caused war to arise between the East and the West. My hair, she said, is the golden West and his body is the golden East, and the mingling of the two will cause all the trouble of the West and the East to end. On these words she raised her veil, and the hair she had let grow fell about her. I reasoned with her and told her of the great distance, and she said the children had gone, and if they could, she could. But on her way thither it would seem that she met a gleeman returned from the Holy Land; and now I am being reproached for having admitted gleemen and their shows into this convent. Thou hast it all in mind, Héloïse?

I have indeed, dear Mother. And the next scandal, mine own, is beginning: a Benedictine nun is about to leave her convent for a monk. We are not all-powerful in our own lives, Mother, as you know well. Only God is that and he wills it all, a terrible God in this world and crueller in the next, so it is said. When the thunder muttered and crashed yesterday, I said: the earth is afraid of God in her very entrails, and when I saw the lightning shiver I said: the skies tremble with fear of God. The Scriptures tell us that we must fear God—and who does not?—Death himself slinking into the tomb silent from fear of God. She had thrown herself by the Prioress, and, rising from her knees, she said: all we know of God is injustice; and the Pope finds it easier to yield to Abbé Suger than to resist him.

Women come and go from convents, the Prioress answered, and babies are born; but worse than the sins of the flesh are the sins against faith, and a great charge of witchcraft is directed against us and has proved our

undoing more than Paula's baby. Sister Angela is now selling charms and potions and casting horoscopes in the fairs. Worst of all, two of our schoolchildren have begun to wrangle and bear witness one against the other till it seems beyond our wits to separate truth from lies. Some truth there must be in their sayings, for both are agreed on certain facts. That Stephen was unwise in allowing them into his house there can be no doubt. The first to go thither was Adèle, and her adventures, whether false or true, excited Lucille to stay longer in the confessional than she need stay, and to go to the priest's house by night. Her story is that he took her to the garden of a herbalist, a trader in spells and charms and amulets, whither peasants assemble for the worship of Satan, who is wheeled in, in effigy, horns and hooves and tail, all and sundry falling down before him. We asked Lucille why people should pray to Satan, and she answered that she had put that question to the folk, and got for answer: we have prayed to God long enough to redeem us from the tyranny of the nobles; we are perishing of hunger, of disease, and if God will not help us perhaps the devil may. When questioned further, Lucille said that the devils who accompanied Satan seemed like nuns disguised as devils, the thought behind being that our nuns here escape by night to these pagan festivals to worship Satan, and to commit in his honour and to obtain his aid, all sins natural and unnatural in the shrubberies and arbours with whomsoever lays hands upon them. So it is Lucille, that blue-eyed, flaxen-haired child, who tells these things? said Héroïse. Who has not only seen, but who has participated in this worship, in her imagination or in reality, that is what we do not know, the Prioress answered. Mayhap she only heard of devil-worship, picked up wandering stories; stories are going about of men and women who have lost their memory of all things and collect in groups about



village fires, and assemble in the woods for strange rites brought back from Palestine, which is stranger still; unbelievable it is that returned Crusaders should have brought this evil into the country. Saladin's magicians are charged with it. We live in strange times. In strange times indeed, Héloïse answered, when a convent chaplain brings children to pagan festivals. For why does he bring them? the Prioress continued; for that Saladin's magicians ordained that the defilement of the consecrated Host is essential to procure Satan's help. And how is the Host defiled? Héloïse asked; does Satan participate? Satan is a priest, the Prioress answered, so it is said, and the perversion is so great that the Host—— I cannot bear to repeat the child's words, and if she has seen nothing of what she tells us, then indeed she is possessed of Satan. Is their sin pardonable in the eyes of God, Héloïse said, if they believe that Satan can help them, or should I say more pardonable than if an unbeliever committed the sin? Whereat the nuns fell to thinking.

#### CHAP. XXXIX.

THE sound of wrangling voices reached her in the passage, and when she entered the community-room, in which were all the choir sisters, Mother Ysabeau said: you have come, Héloïse, from the Prioress, who believes everything these wicked children, Adèle and Lucille, are telling against each other and our chaplain, Stephen? A group formed quickly round Héloïse and Mother Ysabeau, and the wrangle increased in noise, everybody anxious to speak but not to listen, till one of Lucille's detractors gained the ear of the community with news of Lucille's withdrawal of the statement that Stephen had taken her to the village to worship Satan. Lucille's defenders



denied quickly that the child had ever said she had worshipped Satan, only that she had been taken to the village at night by Stephen. Of that there could be no doubt, and proof did not lack that prayers were offered to Satan in a herbalist's garden.

What did not seem clear was why Stephen should have taken Lucille and not Adèle; and the wrangle continued, the disputants saying the same thing again and again, till everybody was wearied of the rigmarole and waited for some new fact.

And the debate slumbered until Sister Mechtilde returned to the community-room. She was at once surrounded. Which of the children has confessed? was the question put to her, and an enumeration of punishments that might be applied in order to procure a confession was passed from mouth to mouth, each nun demanding severer tortures. But, said Sister Mechtilde, however we may punish the children, and frighten them with tales of the rack and thumb-screws, we shall not get the truth from them, for they do not know it themselves. At these words the community-room became instantly silent. All crowded to hear. That is my belief, continued Sister Mechtilde. The children have been playing at ghosts, frightening each other, walking about in white sheets with faces whitened or blackened out of human resemblance; they were joined by some of the novices; Sister Marcella and Sister Ursula led them up and down the passages, and after frightening others, dreams began to awaken them out of their sleep; from telling each other their dreams and the stories that have come into the convent of the doings in the village, a tale of a nightly visitor arose. For a long time the children did not know who this visitor was, but suddenly he became Stephen, and the children began to tell of how they had found Stephen in their beds and waked up too late. So you think, Sister, said Héloïse, that the stories Adèle

and Lucille are telling against each other and against the convent are all illusions, and that no ghost seeks the children in their beds? It may have been, Sister Mechtilde answered, that it was the novices who played the prank of visiting the children in their beds. Else we must believe that Stephen bribed our portress Agatha or climbed into the dormitory by a rope ladder. It seemed as if their chaplain, Stephen, was acquitted of all evil doings by the nuns themselves. For of Agatha's integrity they were sure; the rope ladder and their chaplain climbing up by it into the dormitory at midnight, when the owls were hooting, did not seem to unriddle the story in which they were all caught, nuns, children and chaplain, one which would leave the nuns homeless and might conduct poor Stephen to the stake.

The burning of Stephen was a sad thought, but some nuns had fallen to thinking of what was going to become of them, of the days that lay ahead, when they would have to face angry relatives, who would look upon them as extra mouths to feed; others, who were to be scattered through different convents, were thinking of the unpleasantness of life among hostile nuns and under rules that they had never promised to obey. The convent lot seemed irretrievable indeed. It was Sister Josiane who broke the sad pause that had fallen upon the community-room: those of us, she said, for whom our persecutors will find convents are fortunate, and those who have fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, and even cousins, who will give them a welcome, however short and scanty, are fortunate. But some of us are alone in the world, and some there are who, for one reason or another, will find small mercy from the Church. Sister Paula's incontinence will be urged against her, and though the same blame cannot be cast upon me, my knowledge and admiration of the works of that great man, John Scotus Erigena, will be remembered. We are in truth a most unfortunate community. Her words

struck terror, and the silence that succeeded her words became in a few moments a piercing that none could endure. Before she could speak again a babble of nuns began, and then little groups of three or four nuns formed; sometimes a single nun walked across the room, in the hope of catching the ear of a casual auditor, and every one of these nuns was hot with anger against Suger and the monks of Saint-Denis. The gleemaiden was not enough for Adam; he despised her, a nun was heard saying, and then a little nun said: I heard Angela say something like that once—that man's love of woman was something the world lived upon, a necessity, but a woman's love of woman was more detached—purer; and understanding her a little, I said: yet if I were in great trouble it would seem to me more natural to go to a man for help. Whereat she looked at me gravely; it is not so with me, she said; I would go to a woman. She said she would let me into the secret, but she has gone away to live with a gleeman, a returned Crusader, and I shall never know it. The door opened; and it was Sister Agatha come to say that Abbé Suger was in the library and wished to speak with Sister Héloïse. To speak to me? Héloïse asked, and she looked towards Mother Hilda and Mother Ysabeau. Yes, Sister Héloïse, Sister Agatha replied; he wishes to speak with you. We have seen him, Mother Hilda answered, many times within the last few weeks, but were not able to get better terms from him than promises to find us convents. But shall I see him? Héloïse asked. It may be on some privy matter he wishes to speak to you, Mother Ysabeau answered. But I do not know him, said Héloïse, and she left the community-room expecting to come upon the great Abbot lost in admiration of their library, looking up and down the shelves. But he was pacing the room like a wolf in a cage, and she recoiled inwardly from the thick-set man who came to greet her enveloped in a



brown-yellow robe tied by a rope around his middle. His tansured head offended her, so like a religious brag did it seem, and her aversion for his bony yellow forehead, finely cut aquiline nose, and watchful eyes, was so instinctive that she withdrew her hand from his fat grasp, betraying, or almost, her aversion. Her hatred was that of a Benedictine nun for a man who had come to rob her convent and disperse the sisters through different convents, leaving the residue to shift for themselves, but deeper than her hatred was her dread of him, for she was sensible of his power even before he began to speak, and after the first words she knew that to withstand him she must summon all her courage to her aid.

So were they in the first moments, but ridding her voice of all resentment, she said: will you sit down, Abbé Suger? He thanked her, and while finding a seat for himself and drawing it forward to within pleasant speaking distance, he talked to her about the long walk from Paris—two leagues at least, along dusty roads, a remark that compelled her to ask him if he drank wine or water. Water, he said, and while waiting for the water he began to tell her that he had asked to see her rather than the Prioress, Mother Ysabeau, or Mother Hilda, for he had talked to them during the week unprofitably. To talk profitably, he said, one must start from certain facts accepted by both parties as a basis for discussion. And not being able to persuade them to accept our expulsion as unavoidable, Héloïse answered, you—— I would have you accept it as irrevocable, Suger interrupted, for his Holiness, the Pope, and the King have ordered it. But all discussion between me and the mothers declined into a wrangle; I could not persuade them to start from certain facts, and it was to avoid another profitless wrangle that I sent for you, Sister Héloïse, for the sake of your intelligence, which is known to everybody.

Héloïse's face darkened, and his voice assuming a



stricter tone he began to tell her that his Holiness, Honorius II., and Louis VII. of France, and himself (if he might include himself), and the monks of Saint-Denis, whose Abbot he was, wished to make this expulsion from the convent of Argenteuil as little harsh as might be; and it is for yourselves, he added, to make the expulsion harsh or gentle. You think expulsions can ever be gentle, Abbé Suger? Héloïse said, ruing the words, for they did not seem to give her any advantage over their cruel enemy. She even thought that she desried a smile through his hairy lips, for in his reply there was a certain irony: he had no wish for an argument regarding the exact meaning of the word expulsion, his object being to avoid recriminations. The convent is going to be closed, he said, and the question comes if this can be done without causing a scandal. You would avoid scandal then? Héloïse asked. Of course we would like to avoid scandal, the monk answered, and shall avoid it in a great measure if we may reckon on your help, Sister; you are powerful in the convent and will be able to persuade the sisters not to butt, like silly sheep, against the rocks, but to scale the rocks—— Like goats, Héloïse interjected. If the discussion be conducted on a basis of admitted fact, he said, that, come what may, the convent is going to be closed, much may be done to soften, to alleviate the lot of the sisters; also to avoid recriminations and a raking up of old scandals.

Abbé Suger waited for Héloïse to vent herself, but she sat saying nothing, and, dismayed somewhat by her silence, he continued: I was sorry not to have seen you when you were at Saint-Denis. Forgive me for recalling to your memory the loss of your son, who I would like to think will be returned to you, for it would be sad indeed if all the children engaged in this pilgrimage, inspired to do so by the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ—out of the mouths of babes and sucklings cometh forth

wisdom—should never return to their parents. But you do not think, Abbé Suger, that these children will ever reach Constantinople? I hope indeed they will, and Jerusalem too, and that many will return, else we should not have yielded to their importunities. I am without news of your son, but if he be with the procession that started from Saint-Denis some three weeks ago, it may be that a quick messenger might overtake the procession; and one child more or less would not matter to the pilgrimage, which is sufficiently numerous. You would bribe me by promises to get back my son? We should avoid, Sister Héloïse, such words as bribe, for the use of them will make it hard for us to come to an agreement; and moreover the word bribe has no meaning at all in the proposal that I am making to you. I cannot promise to get back your son for you, I can only promise to help. There is no bribe in a promise, I am asking you to save your sisters much unnecessary hardship by your counsel—— By not trying to withstand you? Héloïse interrupted. By not trying to resist the closing of the convent, he answered; for if you resist and create scandal we are powerless to help you. The orders of the King and the Pope must be obeyed. If we are thrown out of this convent, Héloïse said, we shall have to beg at the doors of the churches in our Benedictine robes. That is the scandal, Sister Héloïse, we wish to avoid, he replied. You would have our lands, she said, and would have us come to terms, and I am asked to make them pleasant and agreeable. And you will not? Abbé Suger said, rising. Am I to understand that my appeal is vain? If the Pope depossesses us of our lands and our convent he might at least absolve us from our vows, Héloïse replied; is not that so, Abbé Suger? The sisters of Argenteuil, he answered, do not ask to be absolved from their vows. Sister Angela—— I thought, Abbé Suger, we were to avoid wrangles and recriminations. I have not reproached

the monastery of Saint-Denis with the sins committed in it in the days of the late Abbot; and you might have observed the same reticence regarding any sins that may have been committed in my convent.

We will not enter on a long chapter of the reformation of convents and monasteries, said Abbé Suger. No, it would be time wasted, Héloïse answered. And now tell me, has a date been fixed for our expulsion? A few days more remain, he replied. In a few days then, Héloïse said, we shall be begging at the doors of Notre-Dame. An old enemy of yours, Abbé Suger, my husband, will, I hope, come to help us in the days of great trial that you are preparing for us. You do me wrong, Sister Héloïse, for my first act of administration was to befriend your husband, Pierre Abélard, for the late Abbot, whom he denounced on many occasions in public and in private, was striving at the time of his death to compel Abélard to return to his monastery, from which he had escaped; and he might have succeeded if death had not intercepted his project. I would lay no claim for what I did to obtain freedom for Abélard to live and to teach outside of his monastery, but since you have chosen to speak of him, I may be permitted to tell you that he owes his liberty to me, as indeed he will tell you when he comes to your aid.

Touched in spite of herself, Héloïse turned different eyes on Abbé Suger, who, perceiving the advantage, began to praise Abélard, whom he held to share the truth equally with Bernard, adding: neither being possessed of the whole truth, that being with God. I have not heard of Abélard for nine years, Héloïse answered sadly. For nine years, Abbé Suger, I have waited without knowledge of him. He left me to become a priest; is he one? No, he is not a priest, and may not be ordained. The persecution continues? Héloïse said. No persecution but the law that we read of in Deuteronomy. You know it. In Deuteronomy? Héloïse asked. How can the laws of



ancient Israelites control the life of Abélard? Have you forgotten the text, Sister Héloïse?—He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord. Abélard, the father of my son, is not a eunuch. Your meaning is far from plain, Abbé Suger. To quote again, the Abbé answered (this time from the New Testament), our Lord says—for there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Abélard has not imitated Origen? Héloïse asked. No; but there are some eunuchs that were made eunuchs of men. The pallor that overspread Héloïse's face frightened the Abbé, and he caught her by the arm, but she drew herself abruptly away from him. During these nine years you have waited, the story must have reached you? he said. No story has reached me, and I have waited, asking myself day by day why he did not come. But, Abbé, tell the story, which I do not believe. It was one night, he said, not many nights after he had put you into this convent—— But he did not put me into this convent, she interrupted; I came hither of my own free will. It was one night, he said, soon after your coming, by your will or by his, that Fulbert, your uncle, bribed Abélard's servant to let two hirelings into his house by night, and, seizing him, to satisfy Fulbert's revenge, they cut the stones from him. By others it is said that your uncle yielded to ecclesiastical influence, for as you know, Sister, there are many who believe that Abélard is no friend of the Church, and who would turn to any means to prevent him taking Orders. The story you tell, Abbé, is too fearful, too horrible, to be true; and it is not true. Ever since I came into this room and met you face to face I suspected some dire purpose in you. You would kill me, and for that purpose



have invented this cruel lie. Go out of my sight—go. And without more words the Abbé left her.

## CHAP. XL.

IT was late in the evening, about an hour after Abbé Suger had left the convent, that the nuns began to remember Héloïse and ask themselves if she had succeeded in getting better terms for them than the Prioress had been able to get—a lease, mayhap, that would outlast the lives of the present community—a sort of rushlight hope, a faint flicker that came and went, but still a hope, and they begged Mother Hilda to seek out Héloïse, who was not in the parlour and must be in the library. And going thither, Mother Hilda came upon Héloïse, sunk in a sort of stupor in which there were no thoughts, only pain. No, Mother; no. I cannot talk to you about my thoughts; let me pass. And pressing past Mother Hilda and through the nuns assembled in the passage, she answered them: no terms; let me pass, let me pass, and the nuns began to ask each other what had fallen out. She has shut herself into her cell, and gives no answer to my knocking, a nun said, re-entering the community-room, and Mother Hilda answered: had she news that would help we should have heard it from her whatever may be her woe, and whilst Mother Hilda was speaking there rose up in Héloïse a feverish belief that Suger had lied to her for some purpose of his own; and in a whirl of thought she sought to guess his purpose, discovering none that satisfied her, the most likely being that he was afraid of Abélard's intervention, for she had told him that news had come to her of her husband. If not that, he had lied out of sheer revenge for her refusal to help him, mayhap; and then, like one who has climbed to a height and looks over the edge, she said: but if he should have spoken the truth! Another

messenger came and she had to recover enough calm of mind to go to the Prioress to tell her of Abbé Suger's attempt to bribe her to use her power in the convent to persuade the nuns to allow the closing of the convent without protest. But, Héloïse, thy face tells a tale. Mother, put no questions to me if thou wouldst not see me mad. And without another word, in a strange silence she withdrew to her cell, this time sure that none would come to torment her.

If it should be true! But it cannot be true. The world is full of horror, but not that—it cannot be. It cannot be; it cannot be. Every hap is within the will of God. And she seemed to understand suddenly, in a blinding flash, why the peasants turned from God to the devil. But if the plot be true, it is well invented, she said. But it isn't true; it cannot be true. And she believed it to be a lie well planned to humiliate her and compel her to come to his terms. To make me feel that nothing mattered, and my life being at an end, it would be well to save myself further trouble. A lie well planned to break down my self-respect—to kill it; or a plan to enslave me, to oblige me to accept any mercies he might be disposed to allow me. But if he were to restore my son to me for my services! He is afraid of a scandal, and it may be that I did not do wisely in refusing his offer. Astrolabe in hunger and thirst fallen by the roadside alone, deserted, no one to bring him water to sup. But the Prioress did not believe in Suger; she herself did not, and had done well to promise nothing. But is there any woman so unfortunate? Can it be? she asked once more, and in a strange quiet of mind suddenly fallen upon her she began to examine Suger's lie, feeling instinctively that she could not reconcile the story he had told with her knowledge of Fulbert's character. Fulbert was shut up in a selfishness which, from long habit, had become himself, sending me to school, she said, the day of my mother's

death lest I might disturb by my presence the even flowing of his days, and sending Madelon to fetch me home because he feared my father's ghost. A selfish man, but not a wicked one, he would not allow me to return to school for admiration of my Latin speech ; liking, she continued, to sit opposite to me in the evenings, both of us reading by the fire. In her memory of those hours her thoughts softened towards her uncle, and an amusing incident returned to her mind, one that showed his selfishness exactly as she understood it. He always asked her if she liked the leg of the chicken or the wing, and she answered : the leg, so that he might have all the breast to himself ; but one day, to disclose his selfishness, she said : I will take a wing, and he gave her the wing, but with a cry that would have been childish in a child.

But apart from a selfishness which always had its own way with him, he was kind to her, and her thoughts fell back on the friends he had summoned for music to his house. He liked music, but he had thrown open his doors to the world, after they had been long closed to it, for her sake, and in the midst of her grief and torment of soul she gained a little respite, remembering Madelon and herself in the kitchen preparing the cakes that were to be distributed, and choosing the wine that she invited the guests to partake of. The rival philosophers had brought an end to those little assemblies, and the winter intervened ; a terrible winter it was, and many of the incidents of that winter rising up in her mind delayed the inevitable return of grief. Grief hushes like a wind and breaks forth again in the mind like a wind. And her mind calm between the gusts of grief, she remembered the end of that winter, and that Fulbert had asked Abélard to come and lodge in his house, for he wished her to be well instructed ; and it was not true, as Madelon had once said, that he asked Abélard to lodge in his house for the sake of the money that Abélard would pay him.

Her Uncle Fulbert was full of faults and failings, but he was not a man of crime, and would not have dared to seek such a vengeance upon his niece's husband, for Abélard had wedded her in Fulbert's presence and the presence of witnesses. No, it was not true that he had devised this vengeance. But Suger had spoken of a conspiracy among the canons of Notre-Dame. Was there one amongst them who would tell Fulbert that Abélard was a spreader of heretical doctrines, one who would avoid imperilling himself in heresies (he had found himself imperilled in one but would avoid heresies for the future)—that he would avoid saying any words (who was more skilful in words than he?) that his enemies might lay hold of—and that in this way he would procure himself ordination; and that once ordained his talents would raise him to a bishopric, and if the devil should favour him well he might be raised to St Peter's chair.

So might they have spoken to Fulbert, and Fulbert, a vain and foolish man, might have given ear to them. It may be all like that, she said, starting to her feet, or it may be but an invention of Abbé Suger to wring all courage out of my heart, to stifle my love for Abélard, to throw me back upon nothingness. Rodebœuf has gone to Brittany to find Abélard; he will bring him back, and I shall learn the truth from Abélard. And if it be that Suger has lied, he will take me in his arms.

## CHAP. XLI

A CARRIAGE came to take the Prioress to her sister at Arras, and with her went Mother Ysabeau and Mother Hilda, for Suger had managed to find homes in different convents for all the choir and lay sisters who wished to remain religious, and only five nuns were left behind, Sisters Héloïse, Josiane, Paula, Agatha, and Madelon



an oblate. These waited to be expelled by Suger's henchmen and bailiffs, their choice being to put Suger to the shame of throwing five Benedictine nuns into the public road. And once in the road it was their intention to follow it to Paris to live by begging at the portals of Notre-Dame, perhaps at the doors of Suger's own church, Saint-Denis, till Abélard arrived from Brittany. Héloïse was sure that he would come to their rescue, and encouraged the sisters of her company to bear with fortitude the few weeks of privation that lay before them. We must not acquiesce in this expulsion, she said; and when Suger's henchmen and bailiffs came, saying: if you do not leave this convent, our orders are to put you upon the road, Héloïse answered: we know that those are your orders. Whereupon the bailiffs seized the nuns, carried them out, and forced them on to the road, after which they locked all the doors. We have to obey orders, ladies, but we are free to give you seats to Paris in our carts, if it be to Paris that you be going. At the instigation of Héloïse the nuns refused these conveyances, and after six weary miles they arrived in Paris, and not knowing where they would sleep that night, the five nuns took their station in front of Notre-Dame, and told their story to the passers-by, getting quickly from them enough money to pay for food and lodging. For the laity, Héloïse said, are more charitable than the clerics. Nor did their luck cease with the money that was put into their hands. A pious woman said: I do not want your money; my house is open to you till you find one of your own. And to her house they went and lived in it for many weeks, faring every morning to Notre-Dame and to Suger's church at Saint-Denis, thereby bringing discredit on this prelate, and returning with enough money for their daily wants, putting the words into their hostess's mouth that they were costing her nothing. For such was her complaint, and they answered:

we shall soon have money enough to buy ourselves a house, for Abbé Suger's cruelty has caused everybody to put his hand in his pocket; our story is well known now and there is nothing against us. And their hostess answered them: it has all come about as if by the will of God; his hand is in it. And she told a story of the unseen Providence that had guided her to the church that day, at which they marvelled greatly.

A week passed by and then another week, and still another, charity continuing to feed the nuns unfailingly. They brought back some small coins every day, and these Héloïse was counting when the door of the kitchen opened and a monk crossed the threshold and stood, his eyes fixed upon her. On seeing that she did not recognise him, for he stood against the light, he raised his hood, and the surprise was so great that for a moment she felt like dying, and leaned against the wall gasping, to fall into Abélard's arms at last. Neither could speak, nor were words needed; it was enough for each to know that each was with the other. So thou hast come at last, broke from her sighing lips. So thou hast come, she repeated, and checked the words on her lips: after nine years, for she was now awaking from her almost swoon and would not have the sweetness of this meeting jarred by any untoward word, any word that he might apprehend as a reproach. Is it thou, Abélard? Is it thou? she repeated, clinging to him as if afraid that her senses deceived her and that the illusion might pass, leaving her alone in the nothingness that she dreaded. Yes, it is Abélard, and thou art Héloïse. The words came again to her lips: why didst thou stay away so long? but she checked them instinctively, almost without being aware of them, so great was her ravishment; and still speaking out of it she passed her hands through his hair, drawing tresses from his face. Grey hair! she said, and this time the words broke from her: why didst thou stay

away? A long story that is, he answered, smoothing her hair. Not a grey thread in it, he continued; thou art the same, Héloïse, and thou hast been through much trouble, I can read it in thy face; but thine eyes are the same. Look at me like that again; keep thine eyes upon me, for they are what I remember best of thee, thy grey, earnest, idealistic eyes, that cloud like the sky and that clear like the sky. Abélard, it seems that I never loved thee till this day. But thine eyes wander from me; thou art tired and would sit. Yes, he answered, I am very weary, but glad to see thee. Only glad? she repeated. Is there any other word? he asked. Let me sit down, for my feet are aching, and there is a little giddiness that will soon pass away. Thou'lt not mind if we speak but little for a few minutes? Come, give me thy hand, Héloïse, so that I may know that thou art with me.

She gave him her hand and sat watching his lined face and his greying hair—a monk come out of the wilderness, she said; weary, hungry, and thirsty, no doubt. We have some wine; it will revive thee. And releasing her hand from his she fetched it; and hungry too, no doubt? I am too weary to eat, he answered, but will drink. As he sipped the wine she brought him, he told her of his arrival yesterday at Argenteuil, and how to his surprise and grief he found the convent closed. Why grief? she asked, and he answered her: because I was eager to see thee. And then he related, in the broken words of a man overtired, who fetches his words with difficulty, that he had slept in the inn that night but gained little rest; for I was overtired, and my sleep was short and starting. And despite thy tired limbs thou hast come to me? And have been seeking through Paris for thee, he interjected, at last to find thee; that is enough. But let me loosen thy cloak, she said; let me relieve thee of it. And he let her do as she wished, and from his aching feet she drew the worn shoes.

Let me bathe the feet of the weary traveller, she said. Again he let her do as she wished; and when his feet were bathed, and he had eaten and drunk, something of himself returned to himself, and he asked her: where am I? She told him, and seeing his eyes going to the money she was counting, she said: that money was gathered this morning at the doors of Notre-Dame. So it is to find thee begging that I have come from the Abbey of Saint-Gildas. Of what concern may it be to thee or to me that I beg, since thou hast come to me again? O, Abélard, I have longed for nine years to see thee, and the recompense is great enough for what I have suffered. But thou hast suffered, and the story will be told when thou art rested. So after the expulsion, he answered, of the nuns from their convent, thou camest to Paris to live by begging with three or four or five of the sisters? Some of the sisters have returned to their parents, she answered, some have found other convents to receive them; and she waited for him to speak, but his words seemed to die out of his mind, and she watched him earnestly, with fear in her heart, afraid to speak, thinking that it might be that he had returned to her only to die in her arms. He will be better after food, she said, and began cooking. In the midst of it she heard him humming to himself some old tune of other days, and to hear him, she returned from the hearth, for in her heart he was a singer always, though in her intellect he was a philosopher always.

The sound of his voice brought back the first months of their love story in the company-room in the rue des Chantres, and so intense were her memories that at first she did not hear which song he was singing. Not one of his own, she said, recovering herself suddenly, for she knew all the old songs. A light broke upon her face, and she said: he is singing snatches of the song that the gleemen sang at Etampes. He looked up, and



seeing her in her black Benedictine robe he said: in those days the gleemen sang to a false friar and to false nuns, and now the false has become the true. And they sat recalling their memories of that delightful journey, till at last Héloïse said: let us not think of what is behind us, but of what is in front of us now that we are together again. Let the past be forgotten, its joys and its griefs, to which Abélard made no answer; and she thought that mayhap she had said something not to his liking, though how that could be she could but faintly understand. And anxious to regain the mood which chance words had lost to her, she asked him to tell her the story of his exile in the monastery of Saint-Gildas, among rocks where the tides are moaning always if they are not crashing. Tell thee the story of my exile? he said. It is a long one, and to be understood must be told from the beginning. When thou art rested thou'lt tell it, she said. I am rested enough now, he answered, and it had better be told.

Thou hast heard of my trial for heresy at Soissons and my condemnation to burn my book whilst reciting the Athanasian Creed and to be imprisoned in the monastery of Saint-Médard? So much of my story must have reached thee. That thou wert tried for heresy and condemned and thy book burnt, that much of thy story was brought from Paris to Argenteuil by Stephen, our chaplain, but he could not tell us how the plot against thee began, the causes of it, and who began it. The beginnings of the hatreds that were raised up against me are to be found in my success in the school, which surpassed that of any other teacher. After leaving thee at Argenteuil my triumphs were greater than ever I had known before. But, Abélard, when we parted did I not tell thee that thy triumphs were within the Church and not without it? How often did we not say: there is no advancement for any man outside of the Church?

We follow, Héloïse, the way that is open to us ; sometimes it is a path and sometimes it is a road, and on leaving thee my thoughts were set upon discovering for myself a close and humble life, obedient to the Church in wrong as well as in right, vowing that not till the mitre was placed on my head would I teach that faith and reason should walk together, hand in hand, each dependent on the other, twin sisters, always with their eyes set on the ultimate goal which is man's knowledge of God. But my renown closed the way to me. That was the way we chose together, but everywhere was I claimed the true teacher, and when I opened a school, my school emptied, as before, all other schools. I fled from renown, but it followed me, till wherever I went there were houses too few for my disciples and pupils to find lodgings.

Canst blame me, Héloïse, that being what I am, I taught that which was within me to teach, theology ? And to theology I added the study of secular learning, thereby bringing to my school new disciples, new pupils. It was secular learning they desired to learn from me, and it was used by me as a bait to attract them to the study of the true philosophy, according to the method attributed by ecclesiastical history to the greatest of Christian philosophers, Origen. And as the Lord seemed to have gifted me equally for the teaching of profane as well as sacred history, pupils continued to flock from every side to hear me. The schools, as I think I have said before, emptied before me. This could not happen without exciting the hatred of the masters, and it became the need of all to seek my overthrow by every means within their reach. As I have said, I withdrew from Paris, and this withdrawal was taken advantage of by two of my inveterate enemies. Why, they asked, does he teach secular learning, he who is not in Orders ? And why does he teach philosophy ? And still oftener they

said that it was wrong for one not in Orders to teach theology. Thou seest, therefore, Héloïse, that their plans were to exclude me from all teaching, for, not being in Orders, I should not teach secular learning, and for the same reason I should not teach theology. And these enemies of mine never ceased to urge these reasons for my exclusion upon all bishops, archbishops, and abbots—in a word, upon everybody in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

It was about this time that I was attracted above all by the thought of making plain the fundamental principles of our faith by analogies, and to do this I composed a treatise on the unity of the divine Trinity for the use of my pupils, who asked for human and philosophical reasons. They said that they did not seek for vain words, and that nobody could believe what he did not understand, and that it was ridiculous to preach what one did not understand oneself. The Lord himself reproved the blind men for leading the blind. My treatise was written and was generally approved of, for it seemed to answer all questions, even the most difficult, and in proportion as the gravity of the subject was appreciated, greater was the admiration it called forth, thereby infuriating my enemies, compelling them to discover means for my overthrow. Albéric and Lotulfe took the lead, and they were powerful, having a school at Rheims; and by their reiterated suggestions they at last succeeded in obliging their Archbishop, Raoul, to call upon Conan, the papal legate, to assemble a Council at Soissons, and to invite me to bring thither my celebrated treatise on the Trinity.

It is a long, long story, Héloïse, he said. She waited for him to say that he would postpone telling it, or that, however long it was and wearying to tell, he must tell it. But he made no answer, and she sat watching, anxious, for he seemed to have faded away out of himself again till little seemed to remain of Abélard in the man sitting by her. And this being the second time that his wits

seemed to have left him, she was alarmed and began to ask herself if she should run and call for help. As she was about to do so he began to speak, telling that if a man sins it were better to leave God to punish or forgive him as he pleased when the time came, and for him to apply himself instead to learning rather than censorship. But what does he mean? she asked herself, trembling. And again breaking the pause, Abélard continued: men hate the truth, for few are of the intellect, whereas all are of the flesh; and not knowing the truth well, or being unable to accept it then, as perhaps I am still unable to accept it, I told the monks that one day, while reading in their library, I had come upon a passage in the venerable Bede's commentary upon the Apostles, in which the author says that Denys l'Areopagite was Bishop of Corinth and not of Athens. But nothing that I could say could have annoyed the monks more than this, for their boast was that the founder of their Order was Denys l'Areopagite. The truth did not seem to concern them in the least—it was their interest and pride that the founder of their Order should have been Bishop of Athens—and without giving a moment's thought to Bede's statement they declared him to be an impostor, and their Abbot, Hildun, was worthy of belief, saying that he had been to Greece and verified the fact, placing it beyond all doubt. One of the monks begged me to say which I thought most worthy of belief—Bede or Hildun—and I answered that Bede, whose writings were accepted by all the Latin Church, seemed to me a more considerable authority. Thou'lt hardly believe it, but my simple desire to make plain a truth set the monastery on fire, as it were, and from the lowest monk to the highest they were agreed that I had been from the beginning the plague spot of the monastery. And they ran to the Abbot to tell him what I had said, who of course was glad to find me in a trap, for he feared me even more than his monks. He called



a council of the monks, and I was threatened this time not with a charge of heresy but of a historical untruth which, in his opinion, amounted to an attack not only on the monastery but on the Crown itself. Nor could he see any way of dealing with me but to send me to the King to be punished. My answer to his threats was that I was ready to submit myself to judgment if I could be proved to be guilty; but I was not listened to, and the end of the story was that three or four monks took pity on me, and with their help I escaped one night and took refuge in the domain of the Comte de Thibaud, whom I knew to be kindly disposed towards me, having heard of my misfortunes.

I tell this story, Héloïse, thinking that thou'lt see the significance of it. Those who are addicted to the truth—who love it and seek it on all occasions—find little favour among men. Well, to continue my story. One day it fell out that the Abbot of Saint-Denis came with several of his monks to the castle to speak with the Comte upon some personal matters, and hearing of their visit I went to the Comte and begged him to use his influence with the monks to obtain permission from them for me to be allowed to live as a monk wherever it might please me to live. The Abbot and his monks asked for some time to consider the question, and withdrew, saying that their answer would be given before leaving. At once it became clear that they were opposed to granting our request, for very soon they were reminding each other, hypocritically, of course, that so great a personage as myself was of great value to their monastery and that they could not hear of my leaving it and enrolling myself in another Order, for to do this would be to cast a slur on the monastery of Saint-Denis—to degrade it, and that they would dishonour themselves by so doing. No, they could not grant our request, and they left—the Abbot declaring he would pronounce a sentence of excommunication

against me if I did not return at once, and against the Prior (I forgot to say that there was a Prior on the Comte's lands) for sheltering me. He was for the time being my host and guardian. The Comte, too, feared excommunication if I remained, and it is hard to say what would have befallen me if the Abbot's death had not rescued me from him. He died soon after, and was succeeded by Suger.

It is an implicated and bitter intricate story, Héloïse, and of what use can it be to go over it again? But I must hear it, she answered; omit no detail, I beg of thee, and Abélard, acquiescing in her wish, related how he had approached the Archbishop of Meaux, who seemed to be well disposed towards him, and to wish that an end and surcease should be made of the obligations he had incurred towards the monastery of Saint-Denis; he had reason to know that the King and his Council would approve of his request, and that the new Abbot would not oppose it, for Suger was anxious to purchase the King's pardon for the irregularities of his monastery while under the rule of his predecessor, by submission and the payment of a large ransom. It may have been to enable them to pay this ransom that the monks of Saint-Denis revived the old charter granted to them by Clothaire III., which, as thou knowest, had been in abeyance for at least a hundred years. So it all came to this—Suger and his monks agreed to grant me my freedom and that I might go and live as it best pleased me to do, so long as I did not join another Order, conditions that were drawn up in the presence of the King and his ministers; and I withdrew penniless to the neighbourhood of Troyes with a single friend and disciple, an Englishman, a poet, to some barren fields, and we two together raised from reeds and clay a sort of oratory, our chapel it was of the diocese, dedicated to the Holy Trinity with the consent of the bishop. And there, hidden and believing myself to be

forgotten of the world, I often said at daybreak when we rose from the clay on which we rested : Hilary, we can say, like David : lo, then would I wander far off and remain in the wilderness.

But, Héloïse, my story wearies thee. Abélard, thou hast forgotten much to think that I am indifferent to anything concerning thee ; and vowing that her face should not again betray her, she begged him to continue his story. But how much better I could listen if he would speak the words : the story that may have reached thine ears about me is not true. At these words she would leap into his arms, and the story of their past sufferings would be a pleasant story for the fireside. But if it were not true, why had he not come before ? The thought almost forced a cry from her lips, and that he might not read her face, she hid her face in her hands.

So thou seest, Héloïse, hard as thy lot was in the convent of Argenteuil, mine was not easier. I know nothing, she answered, of the hermitage at Troyes, but my heart goes out to thank Hilary for his devotion to thee. And were ye long together ? she asked, jealousy rising in her voice. Not for long ; peace is never long in my life, and very soon disciples came from afar, leaving towns and castles, to live in a desert in huts that they built with their own hands, never regretting the delicate food they had left behind as they munched black bread and watercress ; as I walked by night, I often said : they sleep better on the moss than on feather beds, and my thoughts turned to the Essenes sleeping peacefully in the huts by Jordan. We have often talked about the Essenes, who left towns and villages to live in huts on the eastern bank of the Jordan, living on the produce of their gardens and the milk from their yoes, speaking rarely, hiding their heads under white hoods. Thou canst not have forgotten, Héloïse ? I have forgotten none of thy words, she answered, and Abélard continued to tell that the number

of disciples multiplied, and that there was peace at Troyes, till envy began to stir his enemies to hatred; and with the same voice of dangerous fascination that had thrown her at his feet, he continued to speak of the peace of the desert, asking why it was that the Pythagoreans avoided all that could flatter the senses, living like the early Christians in deserts, not forgetting to tell how Diogenes came to Plato and roused him in his rich bed with a foot covered with mud, and that Plato rose, and in agreement with the advice of the sage withdrew from the town and chose an abandoned pestilential country-side as the most suitable for his academy, so that the continual care of his health might calm the rage of his passions, and his disciples should not know other joys and pleasures save those of learning.

It was with the bodily ear she heard him, for in her soul a voice was crying: will he tell me if Suger's story be true? But instead of speaking the words which she desired, which he was afraid to speak, he told her that the world contrives always to thrust itself between men and happiness, and that our poverty, which gives us happiness, robs us of it in the end; for as the number of my disciples increased, he said, the difficulties of life in the wilderness multiplied, and to supply our wants there was no other way for me except to open a school of philosophy. To get my living I had thought of returning to the world to beg, but to beg I was ashamed, and dig I could not, having tried and failed, for though digging is never spoken of as an art, it is an art in this much, that it must be practised from boyhood. My disciples said: we'll undertake to relieve you, master, of all bodily needs. Food and clothing we will bring and you will give us divine philosophy, and we shall profit greatly in health by prescription of the great air and in learning, and our minds will advance, keeping pace with yours always as far as may be.



We spoke and lived like the philosophers of old, and there being a disused quarry on a hill-side near to our oratory, we often repaired thither on fine evenings for discourse. A spacious place warmed by the sunset, the semblance of a ruin, it was, with stone seats for those who chose to sit, and passage enough for those who would walk back and forth, with creeping plants falling like curtains over the edge above us, and pine-trees pointing to the sky. Daws and choughs nested in the clefts, and very often men and birds were talking together. I have pleasure in recalling that place, for our best hours were spent there. Yet, as often happens in this life of ours, the ruin and misfortune that awaited us was discovered there by one of our number—a sort of Judas, but an unwitting Judas—the architect of our oratory, and one more devoted, mayhap, than all the others, who said one evening: master, how easily that stone could be detached and cut to the form of a sculptured group above the portal of our church. And I said: the stone could be detached, but what group wouldst thou cut upon it? The group, he said, is set forth by the stone itself. And he called me to follow the lines that he pointed out, of three figures, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but which I could not see, though he averred they were distinct to his eye. Some of the disciples saw the Father, some the Son, but none saw the Triptic clearly from the first but the sculptor. A little chipping, he said, will make it plain to all. And before long he wrought the three divine Persons out of the stone, with the Father in the middle, in a long robe with a stole crossed over his breast, the ends tucked under his girdle. His cloak extended from his shoulders over the other two Persons, and from its buckle hung a gold band, bearing these words: *Filius meus et tu*. On the right of the Father was the Son, but without a girdle; he carried his hands in the form of a cross over his breast

and a ribbon bore the words: *Pater meus et tu*. The Holy Ghost, in a like robe, held his hands crossed over his breast, and his legend was: *Ego utrisque spiraculum*. The Son wore a crown of thorns, the Holy Ghost a crown of wild olives. The Father's crown was closed, in his hand he held a globe, signifying empire, and the Son and the Holy Ghost watched the Father, who alone was sandalled. An assemblage of the country-side was needed to bring the stone from the quarry to the church, at first dedicated to the Holy Trinity, now placed under the protection of the Holy Ghost and called the Paraclete, in memory of myself come hither as a fugitive, who, in the crisis of my despair, found peace and consolation and divine grace. My enemies were seeking an excuse to attack me, and began at once to ask if it were seemly to consecrate a church to the Holy Ghost rather than to the Father. It should have been dedicated to the Father, the Son or the entire Trinity.

Héloïse heard Abélard start out with an argument in a way that she recognised as characteristic of him, and knowing him as well as she did, Héloïse did not seek to interrupt the flow of logic which he could not restrain, so natural was it to him. She heard many quotations from Saint Paul, and the case he made out against his accusers was an excellent one. But why does he put himself to all this trouble, she asked, to prove himself to be in the right before one whose heart cries always: *thou art the right*, and known by me from the beginning, since thy voice called me out of myself; and now, listening to the thrice-beloved voice, she regretted nothing, for she knew now that the story he was telling her was the story of a man to whom a thought was more imperative than health or wealth or glory.

Wherever there is great love, there also will be found pity, and she apprehended more clearly than ever that the man whose destiny she had accepted as hers could

spare no faintest shade of his thought. His thought is himself, and next to his thought, I come, she said, and fell to listening once more to the beautiful voice and to the abundance of words that had led half the world away, herself more than any other. She began to listen again, for he was now telling how he had sent some Dialogues of Plato, and a rare book, the *Elevatio Theologica*, by Proclus, to be copied by a skilful scribe in the Abbey of Clairvaux; and in this story, Héloïse saw Abélard as plainly as she did in the carving of the bas-relief and the dedication of his church to the Holy Ghost rather than to the Trinity or the Son, together with the indignant Bernard and another fanatic, Norbert, who ran about France foretelling the coming of Antichrist and stirring up persecution against all those who seemed to him a danger to faith and unity.

Though they had nothing else in common, they were united in hatred of me and of learning, Abélard said. It would seem to them that Christianity rested not upon a rock of learning but upon the mud-banks of ignorance; and ever since they met they have not ceased to speak against me and impugn my teaching, and wherever they go their aim is to discover some act of mine which would justify them in bringing a charge of heresy against me. Whilst I was at the Paraclete tidings reached me almost every week of something that had been said against me. I call God to witness I never heard of a synod of ecclesiastics that the thought did not cross my mind: they are meeting now to consider my case. A man bears with his enemies easily for a time, but at length he begins to feel himself like a hunted animal. Whichever way he goes the hounds are on his track; they seem to be getting nearer, and at last he swings himself over a cliff's edge to escape them—a thing that I often longed to do myself, dreaming myself out of Europe in the midst of some idolatrous country, where at least I should not have to teach philosophy for money.

But, Abélard, Héloïse said, returning to her conception of Abélard's character—that the source of his misfortunes was his love of truth—Abélard, thou dost defame thyself worse than thine enemies do. How is that? he asked, for his mind had been away, and he returned to the actual present with difficulty. The thought of money was never in thy mind, Abélard; thou didst teach philosophy for philosophy's own sake, and I will not hear thee defame thyself. It may be that thou art right, he answered, and that the money I received was but an accident. It was indeed, she said; the love of truth was always thy lode-star. And now tell me what brought thee to Saint-Gildas—to Brittany. To a monastery, he added, hung like an eagle's nest among rocks; to savage monks whose language I do not speak and whose wants I cannot fulfil. Drink and food they claimed from me for themselves and their wives and families, and we were persecuted by a lord of that country and robbed by him. The ocean thunders around the rocks and the gulls scream; a country without laws, a savagery. What evil providence drove thee thither? she asked, and Abélard, his voice dropping to one of gentle sadness, related that the monastery, founded by Chilperic I., lost its Abbot, Harvé, in 1125, and that the monks were deputed by Conan IV., Duke of Brittany, to go to France, and these, having obtained the consent of the Abbot and monks of Saint-Denis, came to the Paraclete. And all being dark about me—not a single light showing anywhere—I set forth with them for Brittany and have borne as best I might with them. But thou wilt not return? Héloïse said. Rodebœuf, he continued, came to Saint-Gildas and told me of thy life at Argenteuil and of the danger of the monks of Saint-Denis possessing themselves of the buildings and lands belonging to you. The thought of the abandoned Paraclete came into my mind as a refuge for you. But now that we have met after these many years we shall not



part again, she said. It cannot be that thou hast come from the uttermosts of Brittany to leave me again. Thy life and my life are but one life now, as they should have been, without hope or joy except what each may bring to the other. Our lives are twain as before, Héloïse. Then it is not for me that thou hast come, but for thy son? For my son, whom I saw but once; where is he? Did Rodebœuf not tell thee what befell him? Another misfortune then has befallen us both, Héloïse? Is our son dead? We know not if he be dead or living, Abélard, but he has gone from us. He may return.

Tell me thy story, Héloïse. And when she had finished telling it, he said: that boy, if he had lived, might have made the twain one. Then he will return, she said. There is no returning from those pilgrimages, he answered. If there be no returning, she replied, thou wilt give me another son. That may not be, Héloïse. So the story Suger told me is the truth! God has spared us no misfortune, she cried, falling over against him, and when he strove to lift her from her knees she wept the more. He took her in his arms and kissed her, but his lips frightened her, and she could not bear the touch of his hands; and the violence of her grief was such that she did not know the cruelty she was guilty of till he released her, saying: Héloïse, it would have been better had I stayed in my monastery amid the rocks than to come hither to see thee grieve like this. How often didst thou say to me: thy love for me is but passion, mine is above passion, for it is not with my body alone that I love thee but with my soul, with my spirit, with my intellect? Thy very words, Héloïse, but now when I return I find no consolation in thee but hard hands that repulse me. Héloïse, can it be that I have been mistaken in thee and that thy love was not what I thought it, but passion and desire of my glory, mayhap, lest a ray of it should fall upon thee? It would seem that this is a truth. Héloïse, it would have

been better that I had not come hither. And yet to die without seeing thee again, I could not, or my son, him whom I shall never see !

If I weep, Abélard, it is from shock, out of which I shall come the same Héloïse as thou knewest ; out of it I have come already, and strong enough to hear without flinching the story of thy misfortune. Suger was not lying then ? Ah, it was the mutilation that kept thee from me these nine years. Shame of it kept thee away. Art thou not culpable even as I was when my grief took all reason from me for a few minutes ? For nine years thou didst leave me to mourn, but I make no complaint, for thou hast returned. Only tell me that now we shall be united, that our lives shall be one, and that the misery of hope is at an end. But why this silence ? It was shame that kept thee from me ? How little thou knowest me ! Speak, Abélard, speak, for thy silence is worse than any story, worse than any grief we have met with ; and we have met with many, more than enough. Speak. It is as thou sayest, Héloïse ; it was shame kept me from thee, and misfortune, always on my track, is upon it still, for now I come to thee to learn that our son has been taken from us. Is there no end to our misfortune ? There is an end to it if thou canst remain with me, she replied ; and I would hear all, for all thou hast not yet told. Thou wouldst hear of the mutilation, when and how it came to pass ? Two weeks after leaving thee in the convent at Argenteuil Fulbert's hirelings bribed my servant and broke into my lodging, held me, and the mutilation was accomplished. After it I lay in pain of body and shame of mind, saying to myself : Héloïse I shall never see again. How little thou knewest thy Héloïse, she answered, her tears falling upon his hands. Never shall I see her, I cried, during the night and day, and prayed that I might die and escape the shame of it. But death did not come as was expected, and my soul said to me : bury thyself in

a monastery. Mine enemies have robbed me of love and glory; and it was for that I put on the monk's cowl in the monastery of Saint-Denis. My enemies have indeed brought about my overthrow. They have not, she answered; my love thou hast and wilt always have it, and thy glory is assured, for is it not true that the vanquished to-day is to-morrow's victor, and vice versa? It may be that the truth triumphs in the end, he said. Let us be faithful to one another, she cried, for we have none other to be faithful unto. Abélard, let us be faithful to one another. We may not live together, Héloïse, for, despite his mutilation, it would be said, he creeps back to his mistress. What matter, she cried, what is said of thee or me? Yes, Héloïse, it matters; it matters much what is said. A struggle still awaits me against the all-powerful Church, and we may not live together, Héloïse.

Then indeed, Abélard, thy coming is not well for me or for thee, for I had as lief never seen thy face again. Do not speak so, Héloïse, we must live our lives to the end. I must return to my abbey among the high rocks over against the Western Ocean, and the oratory that my disciples built for me in a desert at Troyes, near to the banks of the Arduzon, will be a shelter for thee and the nuns who have come with thee from Argenteuil to Paris. Héloïse, do not weep, for it breaks my heart to see thee. I thought that there was more strength in thee and that thou couldst bear with finer fortitude a hard lot.

She did not answer, and he watched her fall into a trance of grief, out of which his words could not awake her, and from which she did not awaken till the sisters pushed the door open and crossed the threshold, stopping at the sight of Abélard. My husband, Héloïse said, rising, and Abélard answered: my sister in Jesus Christ.

## CHAP. XLII.

## FROM Héloïse to Abélard :

To him to whom my body and temporal life belong, as my immortal life and soul belong to God. When thine eyes read these words, Abélard, thou'lt remember that I have never been disobedient to thee, that thy will has always been my will ; and such it would be to this day, an undivided, mutual will if misfortune had not robbed me of my strength to obey thee, the only strength that I ever sought to possess or that seemed to me to be of any value. But the strength that empowered me for nine years is not with me to-day. I am no longer the Héloïse whom thou knewest ; indeed I know not what I am beyond that I am nothing, having lost the hope of seeing thee again, for thou denyest thy presence to me. A consolation it would be to know that thou livest in thy monastery pitched above the sea, but that is not enough ; with thee I could continue the pilgrimage, without thee I cannot. I must go. These words will torture thee when I am gone ; I know it, and would spare thee all suffering, for, like myself, thou hast suffered enough. But I must brave thy disapproval, and though it is hard for me to do this, I must do it, for there is no reality, nothing in life for me but thou ; I am dead to all other pleasure and my life is over and done in the heart of God ; and like the poet I would that the black fate overhanging me should fall quickly, suddenly. He asks for hope to soothe our fears, but hope has been taken from me, and my soul is reft of all save dread of thy disapproval, of the words : why did she leave me when I needed her most ? But if such a thought come to thy mind, I pray thee remember that I sought thy fame, thy glory and thy genius always, and that I am leaving thee in the belief that, released, thy genius will flourish again. In justice to me thou'lt



not forget that I tried to dissuade thee from marriage, saying that it was honour enough for me to be thy mistress, thy concubine, and that I called to thy mind the names of the women who brought about the downfall of great men. I knew them all, for the terror of my soul was always that I might find myself among them in the end. In trying to dissuade thee from marriage I was pleading my own case, but thou wouldst not hearken, though thou knewest the truth and stifled it in love of me. Thy mistake was to desire me wholly, for in this world God's gifts are partial. Clasp nothing, not even love, too tightly, lest love die in thy embrace. But since those days in Brittany thou hast pondered my words, for I find them in thy lamentations. In telling the story of Jephthah thy thoughts were on me, and in the lamentations of Israel for Samson thy thoughts were on thyself:

O, woman, thou the eternal scourge of great men: thou wert made to destroy them. The first among you struck down the father of mankind and gave the cup of death to the race.

Who was holier than David, who more prudent than Solomon, and unto what blind folly did women not lead them. Who, amid the strongest, was broken like Samson the strongest of all.

Thy lamentations and thy love songs have reached me. The love songs are echoes of a time gone by, the lamentations tell that, released, thy genius will flourish again; and so I do not leave thee hopeless after all. But again I hear thy voice reproving me, saying: she has divided herself from me for ever by disobeying God's law. But who shall say that in speaking to Moses the words: thou shalt not kill, it was God's thought to forbid man to take his own life? Was not his law raised up against man killing his fellow? So indeed we may understand the law, for has not our Lord Jesus Christ said: love thy neighbour as thyself. But God's laws are not fully

revealed to our understanding, and so imperfect are our natures that each must explain God's law to himself and to herself. And knowing what my strength is and the burden of suffering he has put upon me, I dare to put my trust in his inclement clemency. Thy genius was a gift from him which he would protect, which he would save for his unknown purposes; and in this belief I find courage as Jephthah's daughter did, but unlike her I do not ask for two months' reprieve, but that my death shall be prompt, as is the promise of the phial. Be strong, Abélard, read this letter with firm hands, without tears, remembering that Jephthah placed his sword against his daughter's bosom without fear. Her story will still the reproaches which I dread. Once more I beseech thee to put no blame upon me, and to think well that all that has been had to be for reasons unknown to us. I was brave in my way and thou wast brave in thy way. But our hardihood has served us nothing, so it seems, unless indeed my death releases thy genius from the constraint my life put upon it. Thou art stronger than I am and will endure thy life to the end, but being a woman I cannot bear with mine any longer. Ah, Abélard, would that it had been otherwise.

Her pen had flowed on without stopping, and might have flowed on for some lines longer, but a footstep interrupted her thoughts, and, looking up, she saw Abélard. What is this? he said, laying his hand on the phial. Give it to me, she cried. He let her take it, and without answering took the letter and began to read it aloud to her. So thou wouldst be divided from me for ever, he said, for that thou'rt unable to endure a few more years of grief for eternity's sake? This phial of poison would set to rest thy troubles here, whilst robbing thee of heaven. What are our troubles here compared with the troubles of those on the other

side who were disobedient to God's commands? We might not be divided, Héloïse answered. Which means, he said, that thou wouldst face hell with me rather than heaven without me? Abélard, there is no heaven for me without thee. Then away with the poison, he said, and bear with thy life for the sake of eternity; and let us dedicate to God whatever years remain to us to live, and so gain a happiness to which there will be no end. A wiser course that is, for what joy would there be in heaven for me without thee, Héloïse? Will our lives in heaven be as our lives were in the days that have gone? she asked. Wilt thou be given back to me whole? We know but little of heaven, he answered; only this for certain, that heaven is happiness. Earthly pains may differ from eternal pain, but happiness is the same in heaven as on earth. Is that, she asked, an answer to my question? It is, he answered, for since we shall be happy in heaven, the means of enjoying our happiness must be given back to us—— It is said by some that at the last day we rise with the body that we are now wearing, and it is said by others (by Origen, my predecessor in mutilation and in suspicion of heresy) that although our present flesh dies it holds within it a root, a seed, from which springs our heavenly body. It may be as thou sayest, Abélard, as Origen and many others dreamed, but he parted with his manhood to escape from sin. Not to escape sin, Abélard said, but to escape suspicions of sin, and was reprov'd for it by the Church, for we must not escape from sin or suspicion of sin by such gross means as Origen took. Sin is not of the flesh but of the spirit, and he who is not aware of the sin does not sin. But it would seem that once more I am dropping into a heresy, a thing that in this world seems hard to escape from if one thinks at all. But Origen, she said, was ordained, though he castrated himself. The Church was laxer, he answered, in those days than now. I am

Abbot of Saint-Gildas, and will die Abbot without hope of other advancement, for outside of the priesthood the Church has no higher office than Abbot. My enemies have succeeded. No bishop would ordain me for valid reasons, and hope has ended for me in this world. It would seem that hope has ended for thee, since thou sayest herein that thou canst not love any other. Life without love is a weary burden for us to bear, and a useless one too, if henceforth our adventure be not heaven, so throw the poison into the street; spill it into the mud. Obey me for thy sake and mine, and accept the Paraclete—be its Abbess—and we will go thither with the sisters who have remained faithful. I have no heart but to do thy bidding, Héloïse answered; and in the midst of remembrances that he had never heard her sob like this before, Abélard too felt tears trembling on his eyelids ready to overflow them, but he forced them back, saying: I will leave thee now, Héloïse, and go out in search of the hackneys to carry us over the first stage of our journey.

She heard the door close behind him, and rising to her feet her eyes fell upon the phial of poison. He had said: empty it into the mud of the street, and opening the door she did this, and awaited the return of the sisters, who came back soon after from Notre-Dame, shaking their money-box so that Héloïse could see how successful their begging had been. It matters not, she said, we are leaving Paris to-morrow; and she told them of the convent that Abélard was going to put them into, and of the hackneys that would come for them, and the long ride thither. News indeed this is, said Josiane, and our money-box might as well have returned soundless as with all this chinking of coin—she rattled it again. And they slept that night disquieted by dreams, dozing and awaking quickly, till they were awakened by the trampling of hooves under the windows and remembered that the journey would begin



with their dressing. On throwing open the casement Héloïse saw Abélard on a chestnut hackney, and there were five others all of the same kin, stout, compact ponies, with large bushy tails and manes, wilful eyes, tiny hooves, and shaggy fetlocks. The five nuns rode on pillions, Abélard deeming a pillion more suitable to their religious garb and less tiring to women than riding astride. Agatha, Josiane and Paula, having little habit of horseback, would be barely able to keep astride on a pony, he said, and even when they were securely strapped in upon a pillion, he had to turn to them with words of encouragement, saying they were not to feel afraid if their ponies put back their ears, for that meant wickedness. He promised them that they should rest at noon, and in this hope the nuns rode across the Little Bridge into a silent country of shrivelled hedges and grey fields, with the hill-sides shrouded in grey mist. As they ambled the hooves of the hackneys rang out from the frozen clods, and all seeming to be going well Abélard turned in his saddle, crying to them that they must not clutch at their bridles, for the ponies will not trip if you allow them to look after themselves. But my pony will go too fast if I do not hold him in, Josiane answered. And my pony will follow Josiane's, Agatha cried out. And I shall be left all alone, for my pony is lazy, said Madelon. Your ponies will settle down to their amble, Abélard replied, and will be loath to leave each other; nor will they pass us on the road.

And when another league was accomplished without a bolt, a runaway, or a fall, Abélard felt compelled to turn in his saddle to remark that the ponies were now travelling in good order, and that they would reach an inn at noon where they would rest. He heard the three sisters speaking together and his heart smote him, for he felt it would be hard to keep silence any longer, and if he spoke to Héloïse at all he must speak of greater things

than the mere accidents of the road. There was no way of escape from speaking of what was on their minds, for each knew that the journey they were engaged on was the last they would undertake together. For as soon as he had established her Abbess of the Paraclete, which he would do without doubt—the Bishop of Meaux, being a friend, would offer no opposition and would obtain sooner or later the approval of the Pope—he must return to Brittany and never ride again to the Paraclete, lest his enemies, seeing him going thither, should mock and jeer, saying in their beards: the old wether still hankers after his yoe. So they would speak of him, being pitiless, and he sought for words whereby he might break the news to Héloïse that they might hope for nothing in this world, but that God would recompense them in the next for unmerited suffering. A shade came into his face, for Héloïse had suffered, he feared, without much belief in an eternal recompense; yet she had ceded to his prayer not to take poison, but to put her faith in God and live her appointed life, however empty it might be. It would be lonelier for her than for him, for he still cherished the hope that divine philosophy would prevail in the end, bringing all the world into God's fold. Faith was the antique shepherd, Reason was the new. But Héloïse had not Philosophy, and if he were taken from her was he sure that she would be able to endure her life? and if she were not, then indeed they would be separated. So he put to her the question: what hast thou done with the poison? and she answered that she had emptied the phial into the street's mud. For having obeyed thee, Abélard, always, I was moved not to disobey thee in the end, for to do so would spoil all; and he answered that she had done well, saying (knowing well that it would please her to hear him say it): heaven would not be heaven for me without thee; thou wert my heaven on earth and wilt be my heaven hereafter, if

we gain heaven. As all hangs on that, let us devote, as I said before, whatever years of life remain to us to gaining heaven. It was surely wisdom to spare no pains to accomplish our love, for when we meet in heaven there will be a fulfilment of love such as has not befallen us here; though our love was very great on earth, it will be greater in heaven. Wherefore I am taking thee to the Paraclete, to the solitude by the banks of the Arduzon, for it is not in castles hung with silk, overlooking parks graced with noble trees and terraces, that the soul turns to God, but in solitude 'mid rocks and sand where there is nothing pleasing. But be not afraid; the lands of the Paraclete are smiling, pleasant lands compared with the rocks that overhang the Western Ocean whither my lot lies. And Héloïse answered him: the banks of the Arduzon will be welcomed by me, for to my ears the echo of thy voice will linger among the rocks of the hill-side, and my eyes shall find the footsteps that the earth has allowed to pass into nothingness. For man hath a memory and an imagination, and to our ears and eyes thou wilt be present always; we shall say to each other: all that is not wilderness, for here he worked and lived. All about us is his handiwork; before he came this country was known only to robbers and wild beasts. Thy lot will be hard at first, he said, but it will become easier with time. She answered: thou wilt write and establish a rule for me and my nuns to follow? And they journeyed on again, arriving at the inn tired, all of them: Josiane, Agatha and Paula so tired that it was late next morning before they started again on their journey. A missel thrush sang on a bare bough. A song out of season, Abélard said. The moist morning deceives him; and he fell to thinking of the winter in which he and Rodebœuf wrote the songs that they were to sing when they started forth at the end of April, stopping at the various castles for festivals of song and jousting in the lists.

At noon the sky was blue, the sun was shining; larks rose wet-winged from the fields singing, and in a little while (four hours later) the day was declining, and riding through the dusk they saw great companies of rooks flopping home through the sky, making for some rooky woods about a nobleman's castle. The birds came in thousands, and then there was a lull, a talking, a great shuffling of the branches, as the pilgrims rode beneath them. Again the sky was filled with rooks; at every opening of the trees they caught sight of late-comers, and in the blue gloom of the wintry evening, in the hour that is not day nor night, the bats zigzagged round byre and barn, flying almost in the faces of the travellers, casting shadows on the moonlit road and then disappearing in the mist.

There were still some miles to ride before they reached the next village, and Abélard and Héloïse rode immersed in the sad belief that their lives were wasted and that their last hope was heaven. Abélard believed in heaven, therefore Héloïse believed, and, united at last, they rode to Troyes, thinking how they were to live out the few years that remained for them to live, thereby gaining an immortal happiness, the letters germinating in their minds as they rode, hints of them appearing in their talk as mile after mile went by.

But it would be vain indeed to record their lives and their talk further, for the rest of their lives and their speech are on record.



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